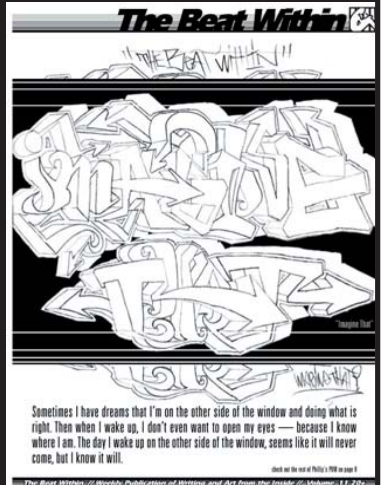
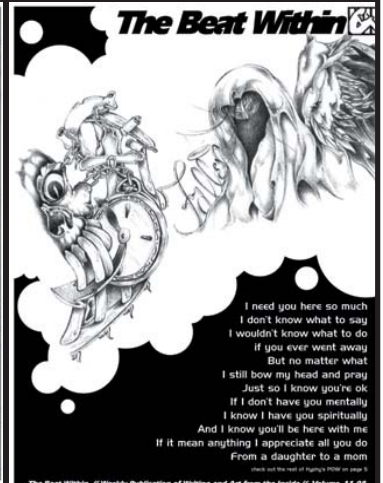
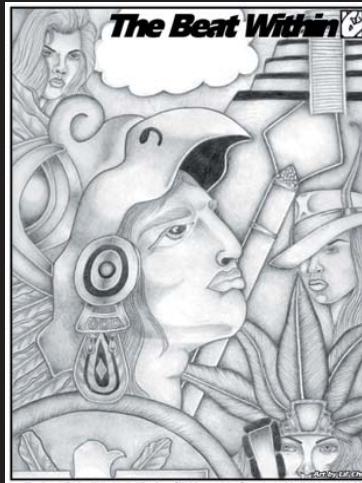
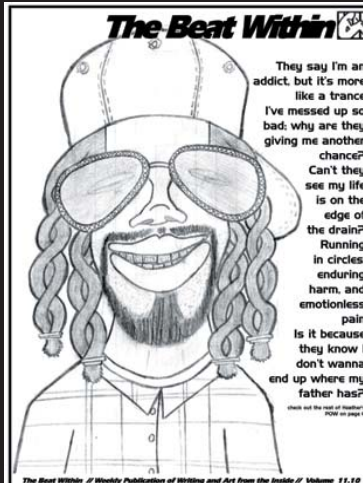
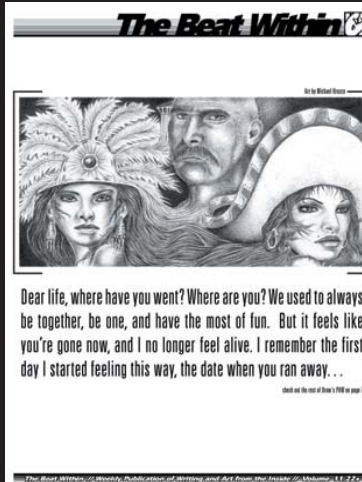
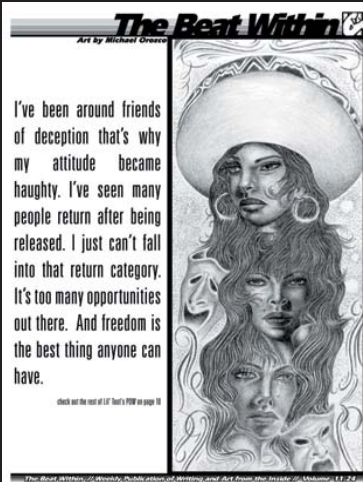
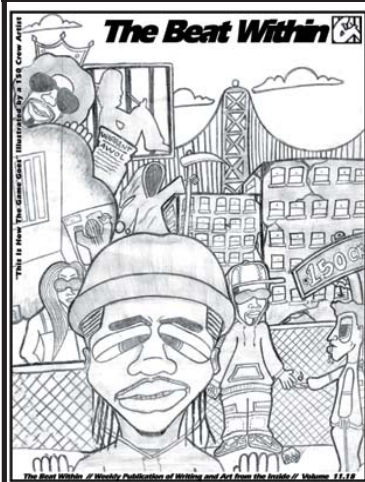


The Beat Within

How many more boys and girls are gonna have to grow without a dad
How many more mothers are going to have to lose their babies, resulting in them being eternally sad
How do we stop theses problems that are only getting worse

check out the rest of James' BWO on page 49



Welcome editorial note readers to the last issue of 2006, issue 11.48 plus a number of writings from 11.49. For your information Beat headquarters will be closed next week, resuming operation 01/02/07! The week we are back we will begin issue 12.01, including the leftover 11.49 writings. So with that said, thank you writers for keeping it real as writers in 2006 and showing The Beat Within love. We do hope 2007 will be a better year, a year to remember. A year when you will personally make big changes in your life - inside or out! A year when you decided that the life that brings you here is over, and it's time for a new chapter, so today is the day you turn over a new leaf! Best to you all in the coming year, we hope to hear from all of you in 2007 no matter what you do with your life, although we hope for only the best! We also want to acknowledge all our wonderful BWO (Beat Without) writers who came up huge this year, thanks in part to a new system we have in place in our office. Producing The Beat Within is truly a team effort. We all need each other to create what it is we have in our hands tonight. This is not publication that one or two people create, it's created by a host of colleagues and as you know hundreds of writers who believe! Best to you all, thanks again for believing!

OK, the following true story you are about to read, was written late last week by our fearless colleagues, Will Roy and Michael Kroll. The first part of the tale was handled by Will, and the second part by Michael. With that said, lets give them the page! Will! Michael!

Yes, There Is A Santa Claus

The world has a strange way of operating. When you think you're doing something right, something always seems to go wrong.

On Monday, December 11th, after spending all day at the office racing to meet a deadline for The Beat Without section (at the back of the fantastic "big" Beat publication many of you fortunate ones are hold in your hands), I made my way to cash a check on Market Street in San Francisco.

My Mondays are usually the most hectic because the following day, Tuesday, is when I need to have the BWO section edited, introduced, and ready to go for the week's Beat. Not only that, Tuesdays are also when we hold our topic meetings, print, fold and stack The Beats, and conduct the most number of workshops of the week. So Mondays are my days of last-minute preparation.

This particular Monday was no different. I packed all the BWOs that were to be published together with a laptop I use to finish work at home, and I left The Beat Within office with a productive night planned with no room for error - even less than usual because I was having my first playoff basketball game that night, and I needed to hurry to the house to get ready for my game.

On my way home, I stopped by a check-cashing place on Market Street (the main strip in downtown San Francisco). I wanted to cash the check I received from Stanford University for speaking to classes about The Beat and my experiences being both a workshop participant and now a facilitator. While cashing my check, I set the bag down next to me with the laptop and about 15,000 words of incredible Beat Without writing. As the cashier was counting out the money to give to me, I saw my bus creeping past the check-cashing place. I immediately took the money and ran off with my umbrella in hand.

I ran and caught the bus, but while going through my pockets to get my change, I realized I had left the most critical part of my night at the place where I just cashed my check. So I quickly got off the bus and ran back to the check-cashing place, which was only about two minutes after I had left it in the first place. My heart stopped as I stepped back in to see that the bag with all that priceless writing was missing. And being that the area I was in is one of the worst (as far as people doing whatever they can to get money in the city), I instantly walked around the block to see if anyone had gotten off with it. When I found nothing that resembled what I was looking for, I chalked it up as a loss, knowing someone could get a few dollars for a laptop without knowing how priceless the pieces of writing were that accompanied it.

On my way home, empty handed, I felt so disappointed in myself for being so irresponsible with something so valuable. And when I say valuable, I'm not talking about the laptop, but instead, the many poems, letters, and missives that I lost with it. It brought me back to when I was locked up, needing to be heard, and the pride I felt when I received a Beat in the mail with my mind's creations published somewhere in it. I remembered how discouraged I'd be when I received a Beat that I hadn't written for, or when I expected to be published and had to wait way longer than I would have liked. And when my mind went back there, I got angry at the world with an attitude like, "Why, when I try to do right, things just seem to go wrong?"

I still managed to finish the BWO section the following day because I had saved all the pieces on my computer at work, but the feelings of disappointment and discouragement wouldn't leave. I beat myself up the whole day wondering why I seemed to have the worst luck in the world; why fate seemed to constantly strike me right in the middle of the head like, "Welcome to reality!" why karma always seemed to be bad when it came to me! When were my blessings going to come? When would I be able to say, "Today fate blessed me, The Beat, and the work we do?"

Sometimes you just have to take your losses and move on. Or, so we thought.

And then the spirit of the Season descended like an angel. Today, a young mother telephoned our office and asked if we had lost a laptop computer. She and her husband had found it. Or, to be exact, her five-year-old daughter saw it lying there in the check cashing office, and she told her mama and daddy. And mama - Latasha - telephoned us to return it!

When we went to the apartment to pick up the laptop, we were so inspired by this simple act of honesty and decency. The basement apartment is small, sparsely furnished. A tiny, undecorated Christmas tree sat on a table. The people who live here are not rich, but struggling working people. Latasha was so warm and welcoming, inviting us in to meet her little daughter, Latasha Rae, and her husband, Anthony. We had never expected to see that laptop again. It's Christmas. We know this family could have used the money from selling that laptop. It's our blessing that that's just not who they are.

"I spent my adolescence locked up in SF/YGC (San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center)," Latasha explained. "All the staff up there know me. And after that, I spent some time in state prison. I have other relatives who are still locked up. So when I read some of the letters from prisoners, I knew I was dealing with good people. My husband said, 'Call them. Returning this computer is good karma!'"

And that's just what they did. Of course, we figure we must have been building our own good karma, too, which is why Latasha and her family - and not someone else - found our laptop. We don't think most people would have acted with such simple honesty. This fine family knew what the right thing to do was, and they did it.

What can we say about this inspiring act of kindness? That people can change. That being locked up in your youth does not define who you are or what you can become. That morality is not tied to how much money you have, but how much human decency. That being "rich" is not just a measure of the money you

have in your pockets, but instead a measure of the character you have in your soul. And, at the very least, that the Spirit of Christmas is alive and well, though still rare - rare enough to rekindle in us a flagging faith in the potential for human beings to overcome their pasts and to live a life that makes them proud of who they are today.

We do not have enough words of praise and thanksgiving for this act of kindness. We were planning to write this editor's note about the latest statistics out of Washington, D.C. showing that, with more than 2 million people in prison or jail in 2006, the United States has the largest prison population and the highest rate of imprisonment in the world! But that's just too downbeat an ending to this year - especially when we are reminded by example of what it means to be a good person. Those terrible prison statistics will still be with us as we enter 2007, and maybe we'll write more about what that means in the new year.

In the meantime, we see the return of our lost laptop as the best Christmas present we could have received: A rebirth of faith in the decency of ordinary people who - even pressed for money at a time of year when everybody is pressed for money - knew the right thing to do and did it. So, thank you Latasha and Anthony for being the good people you are, and thank you Latasha Rae for telling your mommy about what you saw.

This is beautiful! We'll say no more. Thank you Will and Michael for sharing the experience.

This week's topics addressed in our workshops prior to the writing that is featured in this latest issue were (from 11.48), "This I Believe" - Recently, we have been listening to essays on National Public Radio every day written by ordinary people like us. The essays are titled, "This I Believe." Each person who writes, begins his or her essay with the same two words: "I believe..." Some people have written, "I believe that every human being is worth the same as every other human being..." and then explained themselves with an essay. Some have written, "I believe there is no God..." and then gone on to write why they believe that. Some have expressed their belief in love, some in kindness, some in friendship, some in family, some in art, some in music, some in the future, some in the past... and so much more. The Beat would like you to begin an essay with the words: "I believe," and then continue writing an essay explaining why you believe it.

Our second topic, "Independence" - What does it mean to be independent? Many of you have lived independently for a long time, even though you're still young. But others of you are just now considering what it means to be on your own as you approach adulthood. Independence can be a challenge (being responsible for yourself, buying your own food, paying your own rent), but it can also be a liberation (not having to listen to your parents, eating what you want, sleeping when you want). The liberation is exciting; the challenge can be scary. So, how do you look at independence? If it still lies ahead, tell us about that mixture of eager excitement and nervous anticipation. If you're already independent, tell us how your views of independence have changed over time, now that you've had some experience living independently.

The third topic, "The Worst Place Drugs Have Ever Taken Me Is..." For 11.49 the topics were "Preventing Something From Happening" - Have you ever tried to prevent something from happening, but couldn't? Was there a time when you tried to prevent a friend or a stranger from getting hurt, but failed? Did you ever try to intervene in an argument (maybe between your parent?) to keep it from escalating, but it got out of hand anyway? Have you ever been the one who warned your peers about the consequences of what they were planning, but they did it anyway? If you have had any of these experiences, tell The Beat what you did, and what the result was.

The second topic, "How Will 2007 Be Different From 2006?" - This is a topic we hope you think about before deciding to write. We know there are things that you will say you want to do differently - maybe it's listening to your parents, maybe it's going to school, maybe it's staying away from the block, or not drinking or doing drugs. But we are equally interested in how you might THINK or FEEL differently in the coming year. In short, we want you to describe the life you hope to have, and what changes in your thinking and acting in 2007 will help to bring about that life you want.

OUR third topic, "Do You Believe In Love at First Sight?" - Many people believe that it is possible to fall in love the moment you set eyes upon someone. Have you ever experienced this? Tell us of a time that you saw someone and bypassed all thoughts and went straight to that unique feeling - love. Where did it happen? Who was it? Did it last? Make sure that you give us details of how you felt. How did your body react? In case you have not had this experience personally, do you know anyone else who claims to have fallen in love at first sight? Write well so that we fall in love at first read.

And our last topic, "When I Look Into Your Eyes..." Before we call it an editorial note, lets give thanks and praise to all you writers, particularly our fabulous POW (Piece Of The Week) writers, they are Fat Wayne, Tank, Lil' Soldier, Ashlie, Loun who writes two, Noe, Salter, Lil' T, Kash, Money from the 150 Crew, Lionfish, Te Te, Lex from SF/YGC, and Uriel and Jesse from Santa Cruz.

Oh yeah, there is still time to consider writing for (the 16th) editorial note writing contest. The contest question to consider writing on is, "A Letter To The President." For this contest we want you serious writers to write a letter to President Bush! It is our goal to not only post these letters in The Beat Within publication and our website, but to send them off to the White House, too! Now, do we need to suggest topics on what to talk about? Doubt it. So with this said, our contest question is all about you writing a letter to President Bush. (Don't write anything that will get you in trouble with the Office of Homeland Security...)

The contest submission deadline was Election Day, Tuesday, November 7, 2006, but as usual given our poor mailing system we decided to extend the contest until December 21, 2006, but we'll consider all pieces that come in through the month of December! As is the case with all of our writing contests, all pieces submitted will be featured in the BWO (Beat Without) section of the "big" Beat over several issues. And once all have been featured, The Beat editors will read and vote on their four favorites. From these reads, our top-vote-getter will receive a one-hundred-dollar money order. Our second place winner will get a fifty-dollar money order. And our third and fourth-place winners will receive twenty-five-dollar money orders. Good luck writers!

All right readers, this editorial note goes out to all of our supporters and friends who help make this past year a very successful one for The Beat Within, thank you. The Beat work is relentless and we appreciate whatever you were able to give us this year. I suppose for many, that's patience, so thank you for your patience. Thank you for your ears. Thank you for your voices. Thank you for your typing fingers. Thank you for your thoughtful responses. Thank you for sharing The Beat with your neighbors and friends. Thank you for writing pieces in the workshops and wherever else you write to us from. Thank you for writing letters and pieces and then stamping and mailing your love/work to us. Thank you for putting up with our flakiness folks, the shhh is not easy. Thank you. Happy New Years! We so look forward to 2007 when we will do it again. We are in this until the wheels fall off!!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

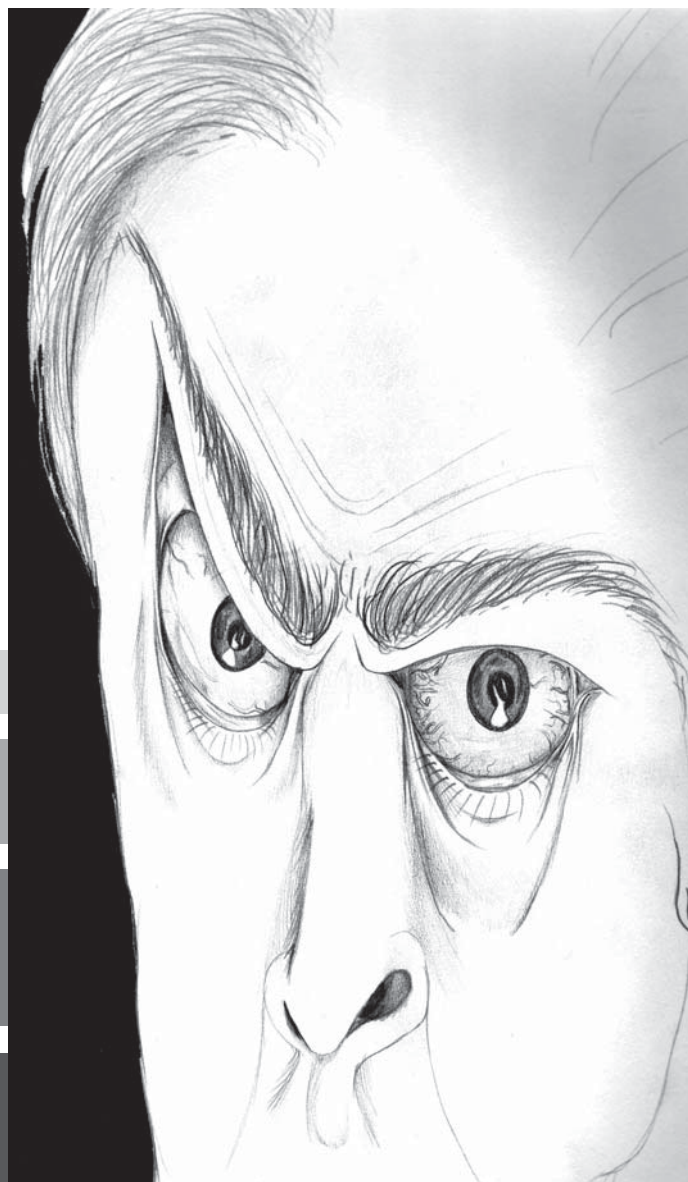
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Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center and Log Cabin Ranch School and the Walden House Facility, Maricopa County, Arizona, Walden House, Santa Clara, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, EPA Charter, RAP High School, Alameda County, Santa Cruz County and Marin County Juvenile Halls. As well as Natural Bridge in Virginia, and Hidden TREWTH in Rhode Island. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. S.F.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org

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One's Too Many, A Thousand's Never Enough

Here I am asked to write about the worst place that drugs have taken me. but as I think about it, I mostly remember the good times that I had. Whenever I felt bad from drugs I would take more, or blame the bad feelings on something else. But I will share some experiences that I had with Coricidin.

When I was in Florida in a military school, I was having a bad time. I got there because of some poor choices. Well, as I was there, I really hated it, and this one guy told me about this drug called Coricidin. It's a cough medicine that, if you take at large amounts, you get high. So I started to do it. Soon, I did it daily.

I got kicked out of the school a couple of weeks later, yet all I could think of was getting more of it. Before I got on the plane back to San Francisco, I ran to the store and stole more to take during the plane trip. When I got home, you might think that I wanted to see my friends and family. No, the first thing I did was run to the store and see if they have this drug in the City. When I found out they did have them, I was more than happy.

So I started to do this drug here, and I did it for a month straight every day. I got a lot skinnier, and I looked like crap. One night I took way too many and woke up in the hospital. That's when I should have stopped, but I didn't. I was addicted! Only after I went to treatment and a shhhload of NA meetings did I stop. But I only realized what happened to me when I looked in the mirror. I looked like I should have been dead. Now I understood why my friends and girlfriends all left me.

Now that I haven't done it for around six months, I feel and look much better. But for those who did it, do it, or want to try it, I advise everyone to stay away from it. It kills. If you think that poppin' a couple of cough pills is OK, well you are wrong. Like they say, "One is too many and a thousand is never enough." And it is true.

This is just my experience, and I hope some of you learn from my mistakes and not make the same ones. So, the worst place drugs have ever taken me was to a boot camp, hospital, jail — and worst of all, alone without friends every day of the week. And that's how I was.

Peace out!

-Lionfish B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There is not one word we can add to this terrific piece of honest self-reflection about what you were doing to yourself with this addictive drug. We appreciate the entire description and your wise words of warning. In the interests of adding knowledge for your readers, here is a list of the possible side effects of Coricidin: "An allergic reaction (difficulty breathing; closing of your throat; swelling of your lips, tongue, or face; or hives); liver damage (yellowing of the skin or eyes, nausea, abdominal pain or discomfort, unusual bleeding or bruising, or severe fatigue); blood problems (easy or unusual bleeding or bruising); or low blood sugar (fatigue, increased hunger or thirst, dizziness, or fainting)."

Taking Advantage

I am taking advantage of my parents' support and the things that they have to offer to me while I am still under their care and supervision. I am not at a place in my life where I am ready to be sent into the world. But hopefully they will teach me everything I need to know about being independent. I've tried the independent thing and it did not work out — but hopefully when I am ready that I will go and be independent.

-TeTe GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We think this is a piece of the week because it is so very honest and sincere. We would love to hear about your experiences trying it on your own because we think a lot of people your age think being independent is the same as paradise without recognizing just how hard it is. We admire you for learning that lesson and looking to your parents to do the job that all parents are asked to do — prepare their children to leave the nest. Learn all you can now so that you can be well prepared.

Hold You Down

it feels like i'm at the brink of insanity
ready to declare war on all of humanity
lost in a world of ignorance
searching high and low for deliverance
people are like crabs in a bucket
hate to see you winning
so they pull you down and say screw it
this world leaves me no choice
but to thug it out and be rugged
the system want us all behind bars
hate it or love it
but we're doing it to ourselves
another brother take your life and think nothing of it
instead of reading books and soaking up wisdom
we're rotting away in this monstrosity called the judicial system
want us to believe that the only thing
promised colored men is death or prison
this world is treacherous
we're playing with our lives like blacks on tetras
how can you prosper when the head of the state is prejudice'
want us to believe that we're the minority
when we were the first to live the struggle
you tell me who has the seniority

-Fat Wayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, we want send loudspeakers shouting down the street when Fat Wayne decides to return to writing for The Beat, 'cause you got the whole package — talent, skill, intelligence, integrity, brutal honesty and relevance! For sure the so-called minorities together make up the new majority, but somebody somehow some way (was it the FBI back in the Black Panther day) got you divided against each other and divided against your own. One shooting another over who's gonna stand on what corner to sell crack mainly to other blacks — got death and destruction both from the barrel of a gun and the crack pipe suction, and then you get swooped up into the system, booked, released, rearrested and sent to prison. No, it doesn't have to be like this, but to stop it rugged thugs like you need to show the way how to resist. 'Cause you can beg and plead to your oppressor to set you free, but it just flatters the oppressor's sense of moral and physical superiority. So it's on you to beat the system, against all odds, thug it out while you're locked up within, but after your release — let the change begin! Yeah, it's set up for you to fail, but you know you weren't meant to rot in jail. Nah, you were meant to write words that lead your peers up out of their cells to return to streets of freedom and hell, where fast wealth is dangled like bait to get the next man to hate and snitch or kill, but if you refuse to play that king for a day, you can break your chains and stay free. 'Cause the system's the pimp, the game's the whore, and you're the mark — until you insist that starting with you, change must start. And if it's Fat Wayne who's ready to explain how, others will follow your lead, starting here and now.

I Believe There is Meaning

I believe what I did to come here was wrong
I believe there's meaning to love
I believe that if you trust in God He will set you free
I believe that all races have a heart,
a heart of good and are partly misled by the world around us
I believe people misjudge each other by their races
I believe the world is coming to an end
I believe in an eye for an eye
I believe I will achieve my goals in life
I believe in second chances, which I already had.
I believe that where there's a will there's a way
I believe on day I will have a family
I believe a positive attitude will get you a long way
Scoping through the words left behind by my loved ones
feeling discouraged and unhappy.
I run behind a tree so that the latenight animal won't see me.
A prayer of chance I said which now sets me free from the heartbreaks I've had. Letting others know: Tomorrow is not promised, to us. Use each day wisely and trust your loved ones through good and bad.

-Tank, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a moving testimony to the faith and your faith in yourself. Remember whatever happens in the Y, how many of us there are out there who believe in these things you write, and most importantly believe in you! We so look forward to hearing from you soon!

Respect Yourself

have you ever noticed
that no matter what happens
you hear voices
but you don't know
where they comin' from
but all you try to do is run
but respect yourself
and don't go get no gun
no automatic shotgun
or twelve-gauge pump
think 'bout who you will hurt
not just the person you shot
but your parents and yourself
and sometimes that girl that's hot
that you consider yours
not just your mom but your girl' heart
also yours
you have to think 'bout every thing you do
should i or should i not run wit' this crew
what am i suppose' to do
cry like a girl
or take another man out this world
but that's not a man, that's a killa, so stop playin'
if that's what you want then i don't feel ya
i'm not a man i'm a young man
if read this you will feel what i'm sayin'
i have never killed nobody and don't plan to
i respect myself and don't want to throw my life away
do you feel what i say
i'm no mobster, gangbanger nor dope slanger
i'm just alex, a hood hall of famer
but nothing change once you put that pistol to the next
man' brain
you will continue to go insane in the membrane
yes i own a gun, never been used
so on my conscience i left no man bruised
what's the point if you can't respect yourself
how can the next person respect you up to a point
but i respect myself
so i get a lot respect from people wit' good or bad health
so just respect yourself and others
and you will see you will get far
i mean get no bar
you won't get hit hard
from them ninjas in the car
you have to give respect to gain respect
not just to others but to yourself
you don't need no mac or tech
just give respect and you will see
everything is cool on the streets
even at school but most likely at home
you respect drug dealer's and killer's
you won't have no pistol to your dome
you will be able to walk from your home
to wherever and back to your home
now think 'bout this poem
'cause respect is the way to show 'em
so respect yourself and i will respect myself

-Lil' Soldier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem deserves a lot of respect, and we hope our readers don't neglect to read it from beginning to end, 'cause you do some teaching designed to be reaching those who might be tempted to carry a gun for respect or even feel tempted to use it — which is the problem with even owning one as you do, 'cause not everyone has the same self-restraint when say a friend gets killed as you seem to (and we pray it never happens to you if it hasn't already). Still what you say we, too, believe to be true. It is possible to walk safely to and from whatever it is you do — work, play or go to school — if you show respect, respect will be shown to you. Yeah, it's weird in a way, having to show respect to killers everyday as you pass their way, but you can't change the whole world in a day — and if they ever ask your opinion, you can respectfully say, but otherwise, you just be you and they'll just be they, and if you carry yourself with self-respect what can anyone else say? It may just be the most important value in the hood, r-e-s-p-e-c-t, even more than making money or having fame. Respect yourself and others, and it's all gain — more love and less pain. Thanks for a great piece.

I Miss You

it's messed up that you're gone
it's also messed up that i'm walkin' through
these drama-ass streets all alone
constantly lookin' over my shoulder
just to see who's after me
prayin' to god
that they won't take my destiny
man i remember all the time
we used to funk with each other
but i also remember the time you used to
call me sister and i'd call you brother
man i hate that they took you away from me
when i realized that you was gone
i was like why they just couldn't bury me
now i'm crying all of my memories away
standin' over you casket wipin' my eyes
but no tears were ridin' down my face
askin' god can i see you one more time
i hate them half-ass ninjas that took you away
so now i can't see you in sight
i can only see you in my mind's eye
i know i can't see you but you can see me
so big brother please watch over me
while i'm walking these bitchy-ass streets
i know that i'm still young
while my life is feelin' so damn old
but when those ninjas start shootin'
don't let that bullet take my soul

-Ashlie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Every so often we get a poem so raw and powerful in a pages that it rattles the bars of every one of our readers' cages, 'cause it not only brings a tear to the eye but a fear to the heart and message to the mind. You've got to get yourself up off those streets, 'cause all the angels in heaven can be watching your back — but when that bullet meets flesh it's the devil's call what happens next. Yeah, God in heaven has your soul, but if you're still living the life of the street, your handing your flesh over to the devil's control. So for God's sake, make a better decision than returning to the life that sent you to juvenile prison and your big brah to straight up to heaven beyond the devil's grasp. Can't you hear his voice breaking through the clouds to ask why you can't get the deeper meaning of his death? He died for nothing but hate, jealousy and greed, unless you can feel his undying love urging you to succeed where he failed — get yourself up off the street once you get out of juvenile jail. Give a deeper meaning to his death, for love's sake, try to change and save your life with every breath you take, in the name of God and your big brother's spilled blood — stop living the life of a thug, with fast money, blazing guns and drugs.

Proud to Say I'm Independent

What's up, Beat? This is Loun from Hayward, California. I just want to say that I am independent and I am a leader. So to all you want-to-be gang bangers — quit being a follower, quit claiming a color and banging something you know nothing about.

Some see me as a dropout, and I am proud of it! Some see me as disloyal and no-good, because I'm a dropout, but there was no loyalty in what I was fighting for — only stress and suffering in my so-called struggle! I just want to say: Trust no one but your family and God, because they're the only ones going to be there for you till the end. Trust no man, fear no man!

-Loun, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's been a long journey for you even in your young life, from the hardheaded banger you used to be to someone sees through that one-sided loyalty and finally chooses to be free! We remember the piece you wrote where you point out that even family, biological family, when caught up in the game may very well put money before love — or should we say love of money (and the so-called rules of the game) over love of family (which otherwise all would agree makes the strongest loyalty claim — but as you point out, is more than a claim when you're locked up and feeling pain, 'cause only real family shows up for you and none of your so-called "family in the game"). You're making a tough decision that takes more courage than anything a banger is living through, and it proves you're an independent thinker and a leader, too! Major props and much respect to you.

Imagine Your Mom Over Your Casket

I believe that in the future there will be a lot of violence. Honestly, it would be good if we humans all got along, but the truth is more and more of us dyin' by the day. Everyone I know has a few enemies, which causes them to constantly look behind their back, worrying if someone is going to pop them. Me I'd rather be caught with a gun than without one. I know how the streets are, and they ain't pretty.

Think about it, if everyone were to get along with each other why would we need guns? The reason why everyone carries guns is because they all think, "better him dead than me." We all think like that, no one wants to die, especially us, the youth.

I would have no problem dying. The only reason I wouldn't want to die is because of all the people I would leave behind, especially my mom.

Sometimes I have dreams of me in my casket with my mom over me crying and crying. Thinking about this makes me want to cry. Imagine your mom over your casket, crying, yelling "why my son, why?"

I try to stay away from trouble but that's impossible. Once I step out of my house it's life or death. My mom has been telling me she wants to move, now it's time to grow up. I want to have a good living when I grow up -- which I almost am, grown. So now is the time to make change.

I know to the place we are moving to there will be no problems. I would never think I would want to leave my hood, but once I came here and seen all these kids older than me I thought to myself when I was there age I will be working or going to school, not here. Being young only comes once in a lifetime, and for me my child days are over and it's time to go into young adult mode, where I have to be responsible. Well time is out, until next time.

-Noe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece broke our heart, because we knew that almost everyone who reads this piece has been to so many funerals where they had to either watch a mother cry over a casket, or worse found themselves crying over a casket too. What made this piece put our broken heart together again, though, was the personal strength you showed, and the way you wrote about the love between you and your mom, and the new hopes that this dark and dangerous part of your life may be ending, and a brighter safer one beginning. Is this true? Are we right to feel that hope?

I don't have friends, don't need friends,
don't want friends.

Don't Need Friends

Hey, this is Uriel also known as Lil' Seven, just chilling, killing time by myself, and I don't trip at all. I always say to myself: I don't have friends, don't need friends, don't want friends.

And yes, I always walk with a smile on my face. It's not to impress people. It's to make my time go by faster. I don't want to impress anybody. I don't look after anybody. Only my little girl, who I might never get to play with on the outs. That is because of stupid choices I made while on the outs. And now I am living in this hell. Well, to me, it's just getting started. I will just wait. It will get worse. So do good. Stay out.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Uriel, we know you are preparing yourself for a difficult time. And we know that you have a good heart. We want you to keep that heart open. No matter where you are, a true friend is a great blessing. So try to be open to friendship. And do not give up on yourself. You have friends you don't even know.

Summer 2005 Chapter 1

It all started on the 2005 summer.

It was a Tuesday around noon when my patna approached me and said "What's up?" Then he asked was I ready to make real money, and I said, "Hell yeah"! He asked me to come through around 6pm. When I got there he handed me a sandwich bag all crumbled up, and I knew to pocket it. He told me to go home and said he would call me tomorrow.

When I got home, I went to the bathroom and counted 15 bags of cocaine. It looked like 20 dollar bags, 'cause I've seen them before. The thought in my mind was, how much profit would I have?

The next day I got a call around 11am. My patna then said to come through. He said I wouldn't have to find any customers, 'cause he had hooked it up and gave my phone number out to people. He then said call me up later on at night and if there were any problems to call him up. Around 11 pm I hit him up and said that I had sold all of them.

I didn't want to say anything hot on the phone so I then went over to his house and had a smile on my face 'cause I knew I did good.

Then he said it was good and I said three-hundred is good, and he took one-hundred-and-twenty from me and asked if I was ready for half-an-ounce and I said "Whatever!"

He then handed me a half. For a second I thought it was a bit too much, but my clumsy self agreed to it.

The next day it was a bit dry but I then had a few calls. And I was asked to meet a girl named Stephanie on the corner. When I got there she asked me to get in the car. I then sat in the passenger seat and noticed two people in the back seat...

The female said, "What's up? Can I get some credit?"

I said "hell nah." And then she said well my brothers 'gonna have to take it. And I said "Screw your brother!" But as I tried to open the door, I felt a gun to my head, and as I turned around it seemed like a pistol, high caliber.

Then he said, "Flip yo' pockets open!"

I said, "No, I ain't got nothin'!"

He then said, "What lil' ninja brother? I'm 'bout to blow yo' brains out if you don't show me bunny ears (pockets flippin' like bunny ears.)"

I then handed him my wallet, where I had put my one-hundred-and-eighty dollars and I had ten lil' baggies made. He took all my shhh, and said if I talked that he would look for me and smoke me (kill me.)

When I got out the car I called ma patna and told him what had happened, I said that some ninjas robbed me.

Then he said "wait, lil' sucka all I know is you better come up wit' my money on Friday!" click.

I was shocked that ma patna... (to be continued)

-Salter, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is an amazing tragic story that is well told - and we are sure many can sadly relate to. And man you left us on a cliffhanger - not just mid-story but mid-sentence! Once drugs and cash are involved, you can't trust anybody, not the so-called patna who let you down when you had trouble, not the so called customer who brought her people to put a gun to your head. Did this experience change your mind about this kind of work, or did you keep playing anyway? We guess we'll have to wait for Part 2 to find out.

Sometimes I have dreams of me in my casket
with my mom over me crying and crying.
Thinking about this makes me want to cry.
Imagine your mom over your casket, crying,
yelling "why my son, why?"

Tried As An Adult, Part 4

As we walk into Door 4 I hear a loud boom and the door being locked behind me. We walk, and take our seats on the concrete slabs around the holding cell. As I sit there, I start to look at the detail of the holding cell. I see it's probably 15 feet long and maybe 8 feet wide. There's a steel toilet with a sink on top. (Same kind as the ones in our cells at the juvenile facility.) It's in the left corner. There's a piece of metal on the side of the toilet so it could help block some of the view. I could also see that there are concrete slabs that go all around this big cell.

I look toward the entrance, the door we just walked through. Now I see why they had the red lights out there. The door was average size and it had a window on it. The window was in the middle of the door and about 2 feet high by 1 and a half feet wide. It was one of those windows where you're not able to see out, but they can see in. They had the red dim lights outside the cell so we couldn't see out. But there were regular lights inside so they could see in. So, when I looked at the window I would just see my reflection. It didn't really work, because we could see outside, a little. But it was funny. I would see the other guys in there try to flex and see who has the bigger chest by looking at their reflection. They argue and push each other around and call each other names. While they do that I just sit there and put my back against the wall and look up. I see that there are two lights on the ceiling - one by the entrance and one toward the back. There is also a small camera in the top right corner at the end of the cell.

Then I close my eyes and think about when I was little and didn't have a worry in the world. I would think about how I would always want to be with my mom. (I was a mama's boy.) I felt safe next to her, and still do. Then I said in a whisper: damn, where did shhh go wrong? I took myself on a trip, through my memories, back in time to see for myself.

I started at first grade. I saw an innocent little boy, not a down thug that always has a mean mug on while patrolling the barrio looking for trouble. The innocent boy, me, sits in class talking to a friend and being a kid.

I fast forward a little and now I see myself having a good time outside in the school yard. I'm running around, playing and laughing with my friends.

Now I decide to skip a couple of chapters of my life, because obviously, this wasn't the start of my wrong doings. I stop at the fourth grade and see myself bigger and I had a new style and a new group of friends. We are doing some crazy things, but not crazy in the way I'm looking for, so I skip some more and stop at good old 6th grade. Or should I finally say, 'the beginning'?

I see myself in a creased up white shirt and creased up Dickies. I ain't gonna lie. Those creases looked just a little crooked. But now I perfected the creases on my clothes. What more could you want from a youngster coming up? My demeanor was relaxed. Most likely I was high on chronic, and a 'not giving an "ef" attitude'. I see myself walking the campus starting trouble with my enemies. I can see I did not care about anything except homies and gangbanging. Gee, was I wrong.

I suddenly hear a key enter the holding cell door of the tombs. I snap out of it and look toward the door and see a sheriff. He says: C... O... and T... Y.... - Court! So, I guess it's about that time.

To be continued....

-Jesse, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Excellent writing! Your very sad story is getting very interesting for us readers. We love that you've interrupted the description of your immediate surroundings with a flash back. It's like a movie. We can see it all. Fine job. WE hope this is only the beginning of the teaching and insight you have to offer us all. We are all listening!

Who Is Happy?

What's up, Beat? This is Loun from Hayward, California. I'm writing you from (The Beat's 150 Crew in) Alameda County Juvenile Hall. Today I'm going to be writing about why I think so few people are happy with their lives.

One of the main reasons I think people are unhappy, is that they're preoccupied with being something they're not. They're not satisfied with where they're at or what they have in life. That's why I think people start to do bad things, like they start to sell drugs, rob people or - they join a gang, do both of these things and more, plus they agree to give up their future freedom and happiness.

I think more people need to empathize with others in life, because there are a lot of people out there that have worse (harder, more difficult) lives than we do - and they are happy people! They know how to find satisfaction and happiness with the few good things they have in life.

Trust no man! Fear no man!

-Loun, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a most insightful and profound piece, that shows wisdom far beyond what one would expect from a young man with so few years here on earth, but then, you've had more than your share of hard and difficult experiences in your life, through which you've remained strong - but not stupidly stubborn. You've shown a wisdom and strength beyond most, in seeing through the gang life you, unlike many, were born into, and therefore had the opportunity to observe its effects on several generations of members of your family, not only your own brief (if life-long) experience of it. Your two sentence slogan at the end though, speaks only to your former gang life, because those whom you refer to who have harder lives but learn to be satisfied with "less" - find satisfaction precisely in the love and trust of trusted loved ones. Much is claimed in this regard by gang members, but the loud talk is just intended to cover up the lie. In your family, you've seen gang members put money over love, even (falsely) believing it's the "right" thing to do (by the gang code); and you've seen family members independent of gang membership show up with endless and eternal love in their hearts to help you through whatever problems in life trouble you. Major props on seeing clearly and for sharing your point of view!

I Believe In Myself

I believe that I can do whatever I put my mind to. I know they're a lot of people who would rather see me fail or just be another statistic, and very few people believe in me or even care to see if I make it.

I believe that I don't have to sell dope, or do any of the other things that I do to get money. I believe that I don't have to spend the rest of my life hangin' on the block wit' my ninjas, smokin' dro and sippin' bo, daydreamin' and imagining making it big one day. I believe that I can do something with my life and become something with myself. I believe that I can do something with my life and become something with myself. I believe that I was put on this earth for a better reason than to be hanging on the corner posted up everyday, all day, selling drugs, shootin' at people, robbin' people and a lot of other dirt I used to be on the streets doin'.

I believe that there is a God upstairs watching everything I do, and even still I do it. I believe that I can change, and I believe all it takes is the same effort I put into staying posted on the corner slangin' "D" all day. I know I can become a positive role model; all I got to do is put my mind to it. I know that my momma believes I can make it. And I believe I can make it as well as anybody else. And I know I'm gonna make it, because I believe in myself.

-Lil' T, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel the power of your belief in yourself and your ability to change the way you've been living your life, start doing things right, and rise to a level of legitimate success in your life, and we admire your strongly stated faith in yourself. You can definitely talk the talk, 'cause the spirit is in you, but now it's time to start to walk the walk. It begins right here in the Hall, 'cause if you can't take the heat of these folks in here who hate on anyone who tries to change his ways, how you gonna take the heat out there on the street when it's your favorite homies you see everyday? We know you can do it, but don't wait to get to it!

Why Do People Quit?

is it because they're afraid to make it
or they think they won't make it
why do people quit carin'
when they know in their heart that they would love
to give their mom or dad or family all they want and more
why do people say screw it and say i don't care if i die
i don't care if i get out when they know
they have a lil' sis' or a lil' brah that would go dumb
if big brah, their role model get killed over tryin' to take a
car
why do people quit school and quit tryin' to look for a job
when they know if their mom rode by they would think
"damn is she gon' start trippin'"
what did she think i was go' be
why do people quit or give up in life
i know that they be thinkin' of what they could have been
or how much money they could have if they try to make it
why do people quit — i don't know
because a lot of people i know and see quit everyday
because they think it's the easiest way

-Kash Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Some call it the reality principle, when you realize if you take the easy way today, your life will only get harder down the way. That's facing reality and allowing it to motivate you to make an effort today, so you don't have to pay a price you can't afford tomorrow. On the other hand, it is easier to blow off today, thinking maybe that you're young enough to change your lazy or evil ways some other day. But the habit sets in, and it's harder to start over again than it is to continue, especially after you've let years slip by on the drink/drug/pill-popping venue. Still, we take this prose poem you wrote to be a manifesto that you're not ready to quit on your mom and the folks who love you the most — but it's hard when you see your old friends slowly go ghost, lost to the system or buried in a grave position. Still, you'll come through if you insist that there's no quittin'!

Thank You, My Loving Parents

I believe that I will become more than a statistic. I will get out of jail and go back to school and focus on myself and my family.

One thing that I never did and regret about my life is not showing my parents the love and gratitude that they deserve. My parents were put into my life when I was nine years old and put into foster care. When I turned ten years old I moved with my foster parents and foster sister. They basically accepted me into their family even though I was a foster child, but I was their first foster child, and I had always dreamed of having a family.

I was so happy that God had blessed me with them, but since they weren't my biological parents I didn't show my appreciation, love, and gratitude as much as I should've. But till this day they are and will always be my parents. Not "foster parents" or "guardians" but my parents, and I believe that they will help me and support me to go back to school and not become the statistic that the system says I will be.

I also believe that I will one day have a family of my own and I can share my story with them about struggling as a teen.

-Lex GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Even though they say that blood is thicker than water, we find that love is the greatest thickener of all, and it doesn't matter whether you are biologically related or not. You are so lucky to have a loving family — and they are so lucky to have you! Just keep believing in yourself, and showing them the love and respect they deserve for the sacrifices they have made for you (which is part of being loving parents). We are looking for you to be one of those statistics that defies predictions and shows the world, the system, your family — and yourself — just what you're made of and what you're capable of achieving. Be sure to show this piece to your family. They will cry when they read it.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Why You Feel Like That

now you thuggin'
with the mug and huggin' a chopp'
ain't caught a case yet
— get a job
why you huggin' the block
twelve years on yo' street
you ain't even seen no real money yet
and then the ninjas down the block mad
so now you wearing a vest
at fifteen you ain't want seven to twenty-five
now you living in a cell waiting for death
while i'm out with your chick
you tell me who settled for less
you protecting your cheeks
while i'm with the wife sound asleep
they telling you when where and how
while i choose to eat
you supply the plates for my ride
wondering which car i drive
you mad 'cause your picture fading to black
but you, thug, you don't know why you feel like that

- fjr, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Whoa! You comin' with the juice, spittin' hard truths, at those who think they're too cool for the square life, too cool for legitimate success, a car, a house and a loving wife, too cool for freedom and serenity — they'll keep on thugging for what seems like eternity, serving out that time in the penitentiary. Great piece! Now we hope that you follow through when you're released and that a few of your readers open their eyes and see!

Where Has Drugs Taken You Rale?

The worst place drugs have ever taken me is hell
'Cause I feel I been there and back wit' adventures to tell
Ain't no tellin' where I'm gonna be five years from now
I don't even now if I'll be livin' in two, I wonder how
Stressin' in this cell feelin' weak but I know I'm strong
Satan sayin' give up Rale but I'm still holdin' on
I can't give up, I ain't no quitter, I keeps my head up
No matter how I'm feelin' even if I'm so fed up
I can't blame the cops 'cause I did what I did
Can't blame pops for nothin' cause this my right I live
And I know it's consequences for every choice I make
I know there's reaction for every action I make
I know there's reaction for every action I take
But you'll never catch me wit' a frown, I stay proud up
Situations rollin' down hill but to the clouds I look up
Tryna catch the sun to shine so I could grab it for me
I found a new lil' hustle and a way to eat
Drugs got me here locked behind bricks
When just a week ago I was getting' it, stackin' chips
I guess it's all up to me on how I live my life
I choose to do wrong instead of livin' right.

-Rale, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's definitely up to you how you live your life. You are however too talented with your thoughts and expressions to waste coming back and forth into juvenile hall. We're glad that you won't give up and are still holding on, but what are you holding on to? Are you still holding on to the same values and beliefs that brought you there in the first place? If so find something more concrete and stable to hold on to. You deserve that much with the talent you have.

Never Should've Went

If I could have prevented something from happening, it would be from the same night I got locked back up. Why? 'Cause if I would have never left from my brother's girlfriend's house, it would be good. I would still probably be on the run, and I would have never went to the sideshow.

I would have never had almost lost my potna Scarface that got shot twelve times! I would have never had got my scrape-scape towed by five-oh. My brother would have probably not got locked up. My cousin Goofy would have not got killed! And I would never be up at Camp looking down that hill at Bayfair, wanting to make another bad decision. Love you Mike Jonez. RIP Goofy.

-Lil' Vee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel the accumulated pain of everything that went wrong that night, and we understand why you wish you'd never walked out the door of your brother's girlfriend's house. However, you need to roll back way farther than that random moment to truly prevent the terrible things that happened that night, 'cause it's like fate had it all set up for it to happen some night if not that one. But it was a fate you were all contributing to making into reality. When you tell us you were already on the run, it makes us wonder just how positive your life had become at that point. It's true that we have read stories where someone actually put his life back together with a warrant on his back, but it's certainly rare. It usually means you're still making those short-term decisions that in the long run just lead to more and more trouble — in this case, the apparently harmless decision of going to a sideshow. On the other hand, if you and your family and friends already know that for you guys anyway, a sideshow is a magnet for trouble, 'cause you're out there flossing your crew or your turf or whatever and you know enemies will be there, too ... well, you get the point. You need to make a deeper change than just wishing you were luckier that night if you want to prevent things like this (RIP Goofy) from happening again.

He's so smart because he read a lot, and it really inspired me to be a smarter person.

Independent to live

When I turn 18 years old, I will be independent, which means I will have to take care of me and my child.

Now I need to learn to be independent so I can take care of me and my daughter. But I don't know what to do because I don't even know how to take care of myself. How am I going to take care of my daughter?

I feel really bad, because I want to be the mother I never had. I don't want her to be like me. It would break my heart to see her locked up.

Now I need to turn my life around and learn to be like my grandma and my sister and brother. But now I feel so troubled because I feel so helpless and now I can't go back to New Orleans because I'm locked up. I think I'll get to go home for Christmas, but that won't help me be independent.

-Meli, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The first thing you must know is that turning 18 may mean you are an adult in the eyes of the law, but you are still very much a young person who has a lot of growing up to do. Young people need elders to rely on. And a young person with a baby needs even more support. You have to be willing to seek that support or else it will be very hard for you and your daughter. It sounds like, other than your mother, your family is a good stable network. You have to be willing to ask them for help, and you have to be willing to forgive yourself for not always knowing what to do. Our advice is to find people you trust and ask them to help you, whether it's your grandma, sister or a community support group for young mothers.

I Believe

I believe everybody should have friends. Nobody likes to be lonely. Sometimes lonely people come to me to talk I don't mind having another friend as long they are nice to me.

Like a teacher here. I'm the only one who really talk to him. People think he's weird and think he's a square, but I think he's a very smart person. I have learned a lot from him about philosophy and about the first person on earth. I respect him even though he said he don't have a TV at home. He's so smart because he read a lot, and it really inspired me to be a smarter person.

-Weapon B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There are several things we love about this piece, Weapon. The first thing is that it show you are not afraid to step away from the pack, to be your own person and make your own judgments, whatever your peers might think. The second thing is that you are looking to enrich your mind, to make yourself a better person, and in that effort you will seek out people who might very well be "different" but who have something to teach, something to say. Good for you. These two traits alone should take you as far as you want to go in life. How far is that?

Why Me

Why me? Why do I have to fight for my life on the street? Why do my grandma have to be scared for me? Why everything in my life is bad? Why can't I read or spell? Why can't I be like everybody that can do things that I can't do?

But I guess I am not like everybody, but I'm just trying to fit in with everybody that think that they can be some thug, but that the only way everything going to be bad.

So for everybody that is thinking to theyself why do I have to be like this, just read everything I wrote in this Beat.

P.S. I hope everybody like my Beat and really think about want I wrote. One love.

-Flat Head B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You asked some very good questions, Flat Head, but you also answered your own questions. By trying to fit in with the thug crowd, you have cheated yourself out of your own freedom! We hope that the next time you can make your own decisions, you choose to try to fit in with the "squares" — the young people who choose to live up to their responsibilities to themselves and to their families. You can do it!

Faking My Program

My name is Lil' Dae Dee. I just did eleven months in ROP, I did a good program, which they call it. I got out and just wilded out, I did not go to school or nothing, did not listen to my mom or nothing, and then I served an undercover. And now I'm writing in The Beat on my birthday -- you figure it out.

Why do I wild out? Because of faking my program that whole time, and then when I got out I couldn't fake it anymore and I gave up because, I did not have faith and did not ask God to help me.

-Lil' Dae Dae, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yeah, no program can make a person change their minds or change their life. It has to come from inside. The fact that you did a good job faking your way through the program shows that when you want something (in this case, it was to get out back to your old life) you have the smarts and self-control to get it. But now that you're in the system, the real question is what DO you want? You could probably fake your next program too, right? But what do you want — really, for yourself. Do you want to go back to street life (lots of people do) or are you tired of the cycle. If you are tired, and you want to quit coming to jail, maybe it's time to do a program again, but this time, only a program you believe in, a program you believe can help you. Is there something like that?

... I'm just trying to fit in with everybody that think that they can be some thug...

Hate You

My daddy gave me and my mama up when I was four years old.
He did destroy my body and he killed my soul now the world is cold
'cause I'm sleepin' in a jail cell. I don't feel like the real me and my flesh is weak.
Let me speak! I never had a chance to dream.
Twelve years old falling in love with older men who didn't love me.
Mr. T you raped me twice.
Now he's probably fifty years old and still ain't payed the price.

-Sasche, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Oh dear, it's so hard to hear these stories. What can we do to take away the pain, to heal your wounds? We can only affirm that you are a powerful person with value. Men who did bad things are weak people who try to be powerful by preying on those who are younger, smaller, and in a position that makes it difficult to respond. It is probably the most difficult thing to do, but talking and writing about what happened is a good place to start - and will help you take back your power.

This I Believe

I believe everyone can be successful. It doesn't matter how many police records you got, or it doesn't matter how serious your case is. Nowadays it's hard to achieve a title, "Big Time Gangsta."

There's so many people out in the streets and it ain't easy to get along with all of them. But once you believe in yourself and believe that you will become successful and change, I believe that you will become successful.

-D-K B1, sf/YGC

From The Beat: You are exactly right. Your faith in yourself and the desire to change for the better will get you through life. What is "success" to you? What's your plan for achieving it?

Do I Believe In Love At First Sight?

No, I don't. I believe in love with a person's beauty at first sight, but you can't love someone without knowing them. Love is knowing and being happy with a person, inside and out. When love comes into play, it's in your heart, because you know the person's personality. So I don't believe in love at first sight, because beauty is only skin deep.

-Young Ant B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What a thoughtful piece this is, Young Ant, and unusual because most of the pieces we read on this subject only talk about that "skin-deep" beauty you refer to, as if that can sustain love! Have you noticed how that external beauty in some people seems to fade the more you get to know them, or how someone who doesn't appear handsome or beautiful seems to gain those qualities as you learn how much you like who they are? In the end, our looks fade, we age, we get lines, our skin sags, so we're glad real love is based on deeper things than transitory beauty!

The Government's Plan

The plan is to live. The plan is to claim yo' block. The plan is to kill the enemy. This is not just your plan; this is the government's plan, for us to kill each other, for us to eliminate the race. For Black men to die! So they can have our lives, have our things. So think before you kill another Black man for a street the government owns.

-The Anti B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree fully — except that it's not just other Black men you should not kill, it's all human beings who, in God's eyes, are equal to you in every way. But you're right, as long as poor people are killing other poor people, the rich don't have to worry... Don't kill anyone, period!

Drug-Induced "Paradise"

The worst place drugs have taken me was a place I thought was Paradise. It was the first time I got high off a ecstasy pill. I think it was a blue dolphin and it didn't kick in till about half an hour, but after that I was feelin' a feelin' that I never felt before in my life. I mean I was feelin' good, but at the same time I was feelin' weird.

Let me tell you, I had bought a pack of Newports 100's and I smoked the whole box within a hour. Then I was at my boyfriend cousin house and his punk ass gone leave me there knowin' I was hella gone off that pill and he told them to watch out for me!

Anyways, I was sittin' on the couch and all of a sudden I start seein' hella bugs on the floor. Then I got scared so I put my feet on the couch and I was starin' at the wall 'cause they ain't had no TV. Then I started seein' Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs on the wall. I mean I was really trippin' 'cause I thought I was watchin' a movie. Then I seen a big-ass pink elephant standing by me. So I jumped up and ran outside to get some air 'cause I knew I was trippin'. Then it was hella bugs on the floor outside. So I was just goin' crazy.

But anyway, that was the worst drug experience I ever had 'cause that drug took me to a world I really can't explain but I'll never go again! For real, for real.

-Paradise Bottom GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: If your conclusion means that you have stopped doing drugs (especially ecstasy) because of this frightening experience, then we say congratulations for learning the lesson of that bad trip. You have too much going on for you to risk it all on a chemically-induced state of euphoria that isn't real to begin with and that can cause permanent damage — even death — in unpredictable ways. Drugs not only make you hallucinate, they also kill brain cells, which do not regenerate!

... that was the worst drug experience I ever had 'cause that drug took me to a world I really can't explain but I'll never go again!

My Mentality Has Changed

2007 will be different from 2006 because my mentality has changed. In 2006 I really didn't care about what was gonna happen to me, whether I died or lived. I didn't have a care in the world. All that mattered was money, power, respect and girls. But now I see every action has a consequence. For example, I'm in here so now I got to do the time. I really didn't care if I would have went to jail, and the affect it would have on my family and innocent by standers.

If I can go back in time I would change everything. But I can't. I'm just gonna have to man up, do my time and change myself for the better.

I'm turning seventeen in March. I'm not a kid no more. It's time to wake up, take responsibility and be a man. I failed my mom as a son and I'm really sorry for all the pain I caused my mom. So for 2007 I'm gonna go to school and hang up my rag.

-Vietnamese, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for your honest, sincere words. You've come to realize some things in your life and how you've been living. We hope that you put those thoughts into action when you get out. Sometimes we don't realize that what we do impacts more than ourselves, and you've come to realize this also. Continue to grow and share your experiences so that others may see the change in you, and also be moved by your experiences.

Confused, Thinking

i'm hella confused
my body won't move
you would know
if you walked in my shoes
i try to explain
i try to maintain
then again it came
i went back to jail
once again i failed
i can't get bail
i'm lonely in my cell
this world is passing us by
i ain't gonna lie
when family members die
i break down and cry
they locked us down in a cage
we start feeling enraged
because we wanna be
with our family on holidays
why can't we have fun
instead of shooting
somebody with a gun
killing over money
and where you from
sitting in my zone
mom's crying at home
she's feeling very alone
but she's trying to stay strong
my eyes often stop blinkin'
i hear kid's screamin'
it's god's help i'm seekin'
it feels like i'm sinkin'
i'm not wishin'
i guess i'm dreamin'
but i'm wrong again
it's confused thinkin'

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes when you sit down to write rhymes, it must be the holy ghost or some other spiritual force guides your hand, 'cause the words you use to convey your thoughts seem ready-made to break the heart of anyone willing to listen. There's got to be some alternative to a system where someone like you who really strives to change keeps landing in this same position, though worse each time you get cut to the curb. Well, we know by now you're at the 'Y' — and by the time you read this, weeks will have gone by. We hope you're doing well, 'cause we believe you could make even hell a place of learning and maturing. 'Cause you will be released, and you need to be ready this time to make sure your freedom will be enduring. Much love and respect.

got a lot of skeletons in my closet
did a lot of bad things but i don't floss it
there's a line and i try not to cross it
but i think i finally have lost it

'07

In '07 I am gone step it up a notch, ya dig. No mo' being grimy. For real I wanna do some new shhh. Probably get a little job or something. But, I wanna finish school. See, I been on the run for hella long and I missed hella school. Shhh, that's probably all that's gone change.

-Jungle, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Don't sell yourself short. If you change this one "little" thing and start catching up on what you've missed in school, that's a huge change for the future. It won't be easy, of course — but then, neither is coming to this place!

Ha! Ha!

Ha-ha, that's how i laugh
it's funny, you think you could understand my wrath
in the mental state i'm in, i'm unstoppable
you beating me, that sure ain't possible
i'm crazy, psycho, maybe a bit too dramatic
but i got so many things up in my attic
got a lot of skeletons in my closet
did a lot of bad things but i don't floss it
there's a line and i try not to cross it
but i think i finally have lost it
shhh, be quiet
my mind is having a riot
if you keep the volume down you can listen
it shines, it glistens
as i sneeze, my inner self explodes
all in one motion my eyes close
take me to many different crossroads
then i say, "whoa"
thump-thump, thump-thump, my heart's at a steady pace
i have velcro shoes, so them i cannot lace
my hairs going back, but my mind's in the front
i hit a home run, but i need is a bunt
i'm going to leave with the draft
ha ha ha, i continue to laugh

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Focus your wrath on the life that brought you here, not on yourself or on the next player that couldn't stay clear of the consequences of the game he played. It's hard to hold onto your sanity in a place like this, but if your goals remain in place and you continue to persist, you'll find that you're doing a lot better than you're feeling. With the stress you're under, no wonder your mind goes reeling. But remember it's what you actually choose to do that will shape you anew, revealing the new man that now can maintain stability right through the roaring of his brain in all this immature hostility around. There's nothing wrong with laughter, it releases endorphins that make you feel better soon thereafter.

I've Imagined

I've imagined the inside of my head
I've imagined my blood blue and my eyes orange-red
I've imagined me living in Hong Kong
I've imagined the dead rise
I've imagined a plague of lice
I've imagined pigs that fly,
I've imagined a dog-shaped eye
I've imagined my county clothes stained blood red
I've imagined me dead
I've imagined my head fused with the wall
But I've never imagined me locked up in the Hall.

-Lil' Mental, 150 Crew

From The Beat: These images pile up on each other, each one more vivid than the next, each one more powerful than the other, each more outlandish, and then BAM — you hit us with the most outlandish image of all, the shock of real life incarceration in Juvy, which is wilder than even your imaginations. Great poem, as always! Now is the time to imagine a healthy life free of violence and incarceration!

I'm Getting Judged By My...

looks and my walk.
I look like I'm mad and I walk on my toes.
I hold up my pants and I bite my lips.
My tattoos shine.
People wonder why I walk like that.
I tell them when I'm in my house I'm the jolliest guy in town,
but once I step outside I smell the violence.
And it triggers the violence flowing in my blood.

-Johnny, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You, sir, are a very good writer. Why don't you drop the 'look' and write a book. Write about the pressures a young man like yourself faces in circles where unsocial behavior is expected. There are many people who would like to know what it feels like to be in your shoes and in your neighborhood.

This Is The Worst Place Drugs Have Ever

Taken Me

The worst is to be in a place like juvenile hall. I been in here for three weeks and it's been a living hell for me.

I got caught selling drugs, and as I been up in here I'm learning my lessons not to ever do that shhh again. Being in a place like this is not worth coming back to because it's sad being told what to do by someone else that's not your mom or dad, having three meals in a day that's hella nasty, and have to use the bathroom when you're told to. And you don't get to go outside every day but once to see the sky.

As I am up in here I see more things clearly to do when I get that chance to go home and start my life over. I'm gone do what I have to do not to come back and have them opportunity to have them chances ever again. If I have to prove every one in my family and the people on the outside and to myself that I can do better than what I was going. I'm gone get the money the good way even if it's hard to get.

-Baby Gurl GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Cherish that chance, Baby Gurl, because there are more unfortunate people out there that may never have that one chance again. So use it wisely and we hope to never see you again in the halls.

The Same Road

Recline the seat and relax to the beat
Don't mind the traffic just doze off.
Really doesn't matter now, get set for the trip
It's a long one, so for worries they're put off.
You sometimes get sidetracked and lost
But for your destination it's still the same
If the tires go out or you crash
It's equal to the consequences for being in the game
Injuries, death, it's all the same to me
So be sure to be aware of the road you take
With different roads come different places
So with that, supervise what you make
Dumb decisions and the same old choices
Is what led me down this road
Locked up, out of options and still living with a heart of cold
So take this as a lesson learned and
Don't take that road again
You should've learned the first time
But now you're progressing to the pen

-Vago B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: When you write such excellent advice, Vago, we have to wonder why you can't apply it to yourself? This piece tells us that you know where certain lifestyles take you, but you don't seem able to take yourself out of that prison-pointing lifestyle. What would help you the most to take your own advice to heart?

This I Believe

I believe that everybody have their rights
I believe that everybody make mistakes
I believe that making your own money is fair
I believe that life is hard when you're not ready
I believe that when you can't make it, someone's there
for you
I believe that your parents is not gon' always be there
when you need them
I believe that everybody could try to make it own their
own

-Naye GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: And we agree. We believe that it's human nature to make mistakes and we believe that everyone deserves another chance for their own good. And we believe that you are better than what the system say you are. So take your believe and lead yourself towards freedom.

The Price You Pay Is Everything

What it do, Beat? This ya boy Tweety once again. Yo, orale, voy a escribir un poco (I'm going to write a little) about independence. I think that independence es bueno (is good) but you can do things that no seran tan buenas (that aren't so good), feel me.

Es lo que me ha pasado a mi; yo soy independiente desde cuando tenia 15 years old (It's what happened to me; I've been independent since I was 15.) Todo empezo cuando commence a conocer a unos homies en la calle, mayores que yo, yo queria ser como ellos. (It started when I got to know some older homies o the block and wanted to be like them.)

Now I'm about to be 18 years old next month. Yeah, December 21, and I don't know if I'm gonna be in this nasty place. Ahora soy como lo que yo queria ser, you know. (Now I'm like, what do I want to be?). Females, drugs, money, fame... but let me tell you what, si quieres todo eso tienes que pagar un precio (if you want all that, you have to pay a price.) Yeah, a big price, todo tiene un precio y ahora estoy pagando ese precio, por que no puedo hacer lo que me gusta, no puedo estar con mi familia. Tengo mucho que escribir pero ahora se acabo el tiempo... ahora donde esta todo eso mujeres, drogas, dinero, fuma? (Everything you have is the price you pay, and I am paying that price because I can't do what I want, I can't be with my family. I have a lot to write but no more time. Now, where are the females, the drugs, the money, the smokes?) All the shhh is gone!

I'll shout out to you next week. Orale, pues. Alrato.

-Tweety B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Actually, the price you are paying now only seems big. It's small compared to what lies ahead of you if you don't make some changes in your life! Now that you're about to be 18, we hope you start acting that age — meaning living responsibly, aware of the consequences of your acts, and building for your future instead of tearing it down. Oh yeah, Happy Birthday! (Let it be a true "birth" day, in the sense that you start a new life designed to keep you free!)

Love At First Sight

What's up with The Beat, man? It's ya boy GF, and yeah, I believe in love at first sight. The only reason why is because it happened to me, and till this day I still love her. But I don't let any of my friends know because they might think different of me.

It happened in middle school, in 7th grade. When I first seen her, I thought she was the most beautiful thing in the world. She was like a fallen angel from heaven. I tried to tell a few of my closes friends, but they just think it's puppy love. But to me it's real. I been on and off with her since 7th grade, but it's kind of my fault because at the same time I be talking to other girls while she be trying to start a meaningful relationship.

I can't tell you who it is, but when I get around her or hear her voice, I start to get warm inside and my heart start tingling. I call her my always and forever. When I get out I hope things could be better between us. Now that I'm a little older and more mature, hopefully I could appreciate her more and enough to make a commitment.

-Gf-Baby B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Why would your friends think differently of you if they knew how you felt about this girl? And why do you care what they think of you? You're right, there's nothing like a little maturity to make you appreciate what you have — or, to put it another way, that extra maturity should be enough to let you know what you have lost by putting other things above your feelings for her. Next time around be sure to respect yourself enough to be able to keep her and everyone else who loves you close to heart.

The Truth Behind What I Do

I got da mouth of a river 'cause my rhymes flow rapidly
 I'm smart, I wage war on stupidity
 I came wit' true brutality
 To influence with good morality
 So don't lose yo' mortality
 Yo' need these words 'cause da state of mind we in
 keep us ignorant to reality
 I'm an angry youth trying to get shhh off my chest
 Trying to lay all my pain to rest
 So I target the next set beating a ninja ass falsely in
 the home of my 'hood
 Trying to feel good
 'Cause the truth behind my actions
 Can cause me to have a lethal emotional reaction

-Kk B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We admire your desire to change yourself and your world/While you burn with white-hot heat as the truth you hurl/We hope The Beat helps you clear the shhh off your chest/But to be true, it's up to you to do your best/Just keep expanding that great gift of a mind/And keep sharing — keep teaching — what you find!

Becoming Independent

Everybody thinks it's easy to be independent, but to be independent you have to be responsible 'cause then there's nobody helping you. You have to look for your own money 'cause you need money to buy clothes and drugs. It doesn't mean you have everything to get along 'cause you got to look for your own.

Just think if everything that belongs to you is taken away, that includes your money, clothes, food and home, what would you do? I know that your homies are not going to help you. Sometimes I want to be old. But I don't think that's a good idea 'cause I haven't done nothing for my own. I never got a job before. I just know how to sell drugs, but I don't think it's going to help me no more 'cause I already on probation and I can't go back to the block. And if you get money for a month, you can't do that all your life

-Victor B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You have to buy clothes and drugs? We don't think so. And, when we see everything you have written, it's clear to us that you don't think so either. Selling drugs not only hurts your 'hood (making it harder for people to escape poverty), but it also hurts you because it doesn't prepare you for life and it can lead you to do stupid things. Being an adult has its advantages, but so does being a kid. Now is the time to make a hard choice: stop selling drugs and start preparing for a future that lets you earn a living, have a family, and stay free!

2006/2007

Now, I think 2007 would be different from 2006. It's going to be crazier and more dangerous in the streets, and I want to change and pick different friends and make better choices. In 2006 this year, I been locked up this whole year, off and on.

Now that 2007 is around the corner, I think it's going to get real deep. More people getting' robbed, more people getting' killed. Back in the days, all old people just pass, but now it seems like all us teens passin' away at the age 19, 20, 21... never reachin' our 30s or late 30s. But if we all us teens get together and just changed the city, change our blocks we hang on...

We all need change in our life, but as for me, I want to change for me and my parents.

-Jeremiah B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Those 19, 20 and 21-year-olds aren't just "passin' away," they are being blown away! That's what makes this picture so tragic. We think this is as good a reason for wanting to change as any. How are you going to keep yourself from this place and other bad consequences? What things are you planning to stop doing so that you can show your parents the respect and love they deserve?

Arrested Under The Influence

The worst place drugs have ever taken me is juvenile hall because it seems like every time I came to juvenile hall is when I'm either drunk or high or off an ecstasy pill. I've only been locked up three times, but I've been arrested a load of times. And all these times I was under the influence.

I think I should have learned the lesson by now, and I always tell myself that I need to slow down, but when I get on them streets it's a different story. When that liquor or that weed hits my body I let that shhh take over my body, and it's not me that does the crime but it's the drugs that commit the crime.

But this time is my last time in this grimy-ass locked down facility. I am not sure if I'll stop smoking weed, but I will stop drinking and popping pills.

-Young D B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've learned some lessons but not all of them. The lesson we hope you learn is that "slowing down" never works when you're talking about drugs and alcohol, and especially if every time you've been arrested you were under the influence. That tells us that it is more than just will-power that you need to regain control of your life. Even though we believe you are being truthful when you say you will stop drinking and popping pills, we don't believe you can do it on your own. You need help because you are addicted, and addiction is a disease, not merely a choice. There is no shame in seeking help (AA, NA) to stop a habit that can only put in increasingly bad situations. No one is guaranteed another chance, so we hope you do what you need to do before you are in one of those terrible situations where you're wishing to change something that cannot be undone...

I Believe In God

I believe there is a God because God gave me a second chance in life. I thought they were going to charge me as a adult, but they did not, and the reason for that is God because I prayed every night and He gave me a second chance.

I do believe in God because He has shined his beautiful and grateful grace on me and I am really thankful for what God has done for me. I intend to do right with my second chance and go to school, be respectful to others and go to church and take care of my family because I hate coming to jail and being told what to do. That is one of the reasons why I want to change my life around and do right, but that's all I got to say.

I will continue to keep my head up and stay strong and wait to get out and do the right thing and follow the right people. But until that time peace out.

-Kihei B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Many people pray like you but do not get what they pray for (including all those others locked up with you who did not get that second chance they wanted). So why do you think God answered your prayers? Do you think there is any kind of debt owed for this gift? The list of changes you plan are all very much worth making — school is the key to a better future, respecting others is what you demand others to do to you, and going to church and caring for your family will make all your lives better — but we know how easy it is to make promises to God when you're locked up, only to give in to temptations and forget those promises on the outs. We can only hope that you will not be one of those people whose words prove to be different from his deeds...

Preventing Something From Happening

It seems like every time I try to prevent something from happening, it stills happens. Why is that? I don't even know. But I never give up. I still try to prevent things from happening because one day it might help outta situation that you may be in. I think if a person see something that's about to happen and don't try to prevent it from happening, they don't have no feelings for others.

All right Beat, I don't have too much to say one.

-Lg B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Even when you "don't have too much to say," you still manage to say some important things. We admire you for trying to keep bad things from happening, even if you're not successful. But, LG, if you can't prevent others from doing things with unwanted consequences, can you prevent yourself from doing them? You might not be able to save the world, but can you save yourself?

How Will 2007 Be Different From 2006?

I really don't think it's gonna be different, 'cause, like the song goes, "The Playa Changes But The Game Remains Da Same."

I wish the world would change, but I really don't see it happenin'. When I get out of here, I'ma try to change, but the past is always gonna follow me. What I mean by that is that even if I try to change, my record won't let me do anything, 'cause people that live in a different world than me don't think I can change. They always see us as criminals.

-Francisco B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You're right, of course, Francisco. It is hard to change people's perceptions of who you are, especially if you've got a record (which you might be able to get sealed when you turn 18). So, we don't expect the world to change, either, as much as we wish it would. That leaves it all in your lap... The only change that you can bring about is your own changes — and, by changing, you will also change those perceptions about you. So, when you say you're going to "try to change," what exactly do you have in mind? What specific things do you want to start doing to bring about those changes, and what specific things do you hope to stop doing?

Home

I wanna go home
I wanna see my family
I want my big bed
Where I could sleep happily
I want my P.S.2
Where I could play without drama
I want to go home
'Cause I really miss my mama

-Too Tight B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's interesting, isn't it, that home takes on a whole new importance for us once we're taken from it! Did you value your home before you blew it? Well, you didn't blow it forever. This is just a temporary time out, and one we hope you use to prepare yourself for going home in a way that keeps you there permanently!

What To Do ...

what to do when you hurtin'
what to do with the hatin'
what to do with the shame
what to do with the blame
what to do when you cry
what to do when you lie
what to do when yo' life jus' passed you by
now you fifteen, don't have no dream
what to do when all your heart do is scream
'cause you got trapped, locked in
can't get out the system
without a doubt no one on your team
no one cheering you on
people jus' causin' you harm
you have no trust for people
'cause it's been abused and misused
you feel like you missin' a fuse
'cause all you can do is cry the blues
trying to put the pieces together for the clues
get stuck, ducked and dodged yo' pain
now you' heart filled with rain
you try to let it drain
but you just can't
now you sit looking ashamed

-Joslyn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The pain will be with you for a minute, like a storm system blowing in from the Pacific. Yet like the weather, it will change, if you can face your pain and check those clues as to what and how you kept volunteering for more abuse. But don't wallow in shame; just keep it long enough to motivate change; 'cause staying in shame can send you right back to that same old losing game. Start today, doing things everyday that bring back that feeling of pride, even if for a while yet you'll still need to break down and cry. Face your sorrow, but let it motivate you to create a better tomorrow.

Dead Time

Man, what's good wit' The Beat? Man, I thought I was getting' out today (Nov. 22). My PO and lawyer was tellin' me I'm goin' to the Ranch (my PO was tellin' me that) and my lawyer was tellin' me that I was goin' home. But then when I went to court, they was talkin' about sendin' me to the YA, and that's when my dad was pushin' the hard lines.

But for real I'm really tryin' to change because now they gone give me my one and last chance to go home. I really thought about what I did and I'm really ready because I don't like my mom cryin' when she come and see me. I don't like to make my mom cry. When I go to court next month, that's when I start to change and that's when I start catchin' up on school.

-Hotboy B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You say that you really thought about what you did to get here, but you didn't share what your thoughts were. Besides not wanting to hurt your mom any more (which is a very good reason to change), what else were you thinking about in relation to what you did in the past and what you want to do in the future? There's no reason to wait to start to change. Change comes from a new way of thinking which leads to a new way of acting — and it's obvious to us that you are already thinking in a new way, so you are already changing!

This I Believe

I believe that one day I will be free, physically, emotionally, mentally. I believe whatever happens to you, I mean whatever I think, even if you get 100 years to life you will one day be free. Physically no, but at the same time your mind is free which is the most important thing.

Freedom to most of us is just being out of jail, but to me it means being able to go outside and say to people that I am my own man.

-Skindo B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: When people don't think beyond the physical trap their in — when they think freedom means nothing more than being out — they are not facing the reality of freedom, which carries some responsibility with it if it is not to be lost again. It sounds like you know what you have to know. Now do what you have to do.

Preventing Something From Happening

What's good with The Beat thing? This ya boy Twon. Well, I'm going to give you game on this topic. It was me and my young homie. We hopped on that bus coming from McDonald's, and then them ninjas hopped on the bus. We was eating McDonald's on the back of the bus, and they came to the back. We all sitting in the back, and they sitting behind us, laughing.

Then one of the three asked me where was I from and I said where I was from. Then they looked at each other and winked at each other. Then I told my young homie and said, "We off," and then we hopped off. Then I looked back at the bus and the one that asked me where I was from started to smile and I started laughing back at him.

So my point is that I saved me and my boy from getting played, so I'ma leave it at that and bang on out this hole.

-Twon B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Smart move, Twon. You showed real maturity by recognizing what was coming at you and simply walking away from it before it happened. We wish other young people acted with as much responsibility as you did, and we hope that you continue to avoid unnecessary beef.

Move On And Live

I see care, love coming from the heart, joy, happiness, tears, life, and respect for those who need, deserve, and want it in their eyes, and in their life, because that's the way they want to live, and that can be a motivation to move on and live, and also survive out in the real world.

-Thoughts, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for well put thoughts. You have a way too see beyond the normal things. Apply what you know and see how far you'll go. Continue to share your words and thoughts with us, please.

Why I'm At Camp

i tried to tell my friends not to rob these white people
'cause it wasn't cool, and they did it anyway
i try to be a positive role model for my peers
but they seem to not be responsive to my attempts
when they robbed the two white boys, i was laughing
but i felt sorry for them at the same time
i said, "man, just leave them alone, they hella scared"
when i tell them positive things they call me square
and ask why i think like that all of a sudden
afterwards we all ran back to my friend's house
and talked about what happened
then i stayed for a couple of minutes more and left
my friend danny walked me to the busstop
and when the bus came i told him to go straight to the
house
'case the boys was going to be looking for anyone black
considering we were in a black neighborhood
i got on the bus and my gut told me not to get off on the
next stop
but i didn't listen and i paid for it, i got off on the next
stop
and while i was walking, the cops pulled up on the curb
and took me to jail because the white boys
said i was there while they got robbed
and that's why i'm at camp now

-LeVaedra, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The thing about being a good role model is not trying to talk everybody else into doing what's right but simply trying to do right yourself. Honestly, we're not judging you when we say that instead of hanging around, laughing, while you urge your friends not to do what they did, you need to risk losing their friendship, let them call you a square, tell them what they're doing is wrong and if they don't stop, tell them you will be no part of it — and walk away! You might be surprised. They might stop and follow you, but even if they don't, remember you're not doing what's right for their sake but for your own 'cause that's what a role model really is: someone who does what's right whether anyone is watching or not. Again, no judgment, but when you were laughing you not only sent them a mixed message, but more importantly you revealed to yourself that you had mixed feelings about what was going on — part of you flat-out enjoyed it. And maybe it's human nature, racism or reverse-racism or whatever you want to call it, but if so, it's just all the more reason we have to remain vigilant, catch ourselves slipping, and make doing what's right second nature through habit of repetition. In a way we have to be a role model for our own selves first and last.

I Know What I Can Do To Make It in Life

I believe that I can make it in life — because I will not just let my life go down in a hole, because I have in my mind and in my heart the belief that I can make it if I try.

That's why I can't stop. I can't just sit there and let people tell me what I can and can't do. I believe I can make it, because I know what I can do. I know where I can go. I draw and I'm good at it. I'm going to school for it when I get out so I can take my ability and go as far as I can go.

I'm good at hoops, at basketball. I know I'm good 'cause when people see me play they say I should go and do something with my skills — go play for a team, a school, and see how far I can go! I love the game I would like to go play for a team. I love the game! I would like to go to the big time, but if I don't, I won't go crazy. I'll just do my number one thing — drawing! And I'll get my shop up and running, and paint cars and bikes and do stuff like that. Because that's what I like!

I believe people can be their own CEO (chief executive officer) of their on business. They just have to try, and they have to stop putting lil' problems in their own way to stop themselves. I'm Kash Money with a K —

-Kash Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Going to school to play basketball and study both art (graphic or painting) and business, sounds like a good plan, if you can find a part-time job to help pay your way through. Do you have family support for this or not? Of course it's harder to have to pay rent, bills, etc., and keep yourself in school, too. But if you truly throw yourself into it, you for sure will have no time to get in trouble. On the other hand, if you try to finance school by selling drugs, hitting licks or whatever, you'll find you cannot succeed with halfway measures. Give the do-right life your all!

What's Up Beat?

I'm going to go off the subject on this one. You see, my name is Johnathan. I'm known from all around the bay area. All the way to Modesto and Merced people know me.

It's funny, I've been gangbangng for almost eight years now. I've done a lot of thing's that I regret and some I don't. I used to think that that was the type of life I wanted to live, 'till the day I die. But now I look back on all the thing's I've done and see it's hard to turn my back to all of that. Plus I never thought I would have to, 'till now.

See there's this girl, her name is Cynthia. I've been with her for about five years and on September 16, 2006 she had our baby girl. So I decided to make a change 'cause it's not just about me and the homeboys anymore. It's all about that little girl. I can't keep coming to jail. I love that little girl. So for her I'll have to make this change. Also her mom love's me so much and I love her too.

So I write this for my precious baby girl, Selena Maria. I love you baby girl. You and your mom are my world. Daddy's going to be home soon. Until then, know that I love you.

-Dd, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your life has just begun a new chapter. Congratulations on your precious baby girl and the realization that you've come to. We hope that this motivates and pushes you beyond what you use to think of yourself. It sounds like it has and will. Remember that it is hard to care and establish a real bond with your baby girl from behind bars. Handle yours because there's a new level of happiness on the horizon.

Love At First Sight

Yes, because I have fallen in love at the first sight with this one female. I'm still with her at this time. So to let you know about fallen in love with a female at the first time. How would you ask this question, about love at first sight?

I have fallen in love at first sight because I knew that I could stand with her. I've been with her for several years. I felt that she was the one and I was right about her. So how come people say that you can't stop saying, that you love her with you're heart? I come with a lot of love. Because the person that I love is my baby mama. If I don't love her, she won't love me at all. So I think that it could happen. That's if you see deep inside of her and you say to yourself that's the emotion of love, and you are giving all of it to her. So that's why it's true to say there is love at first sight.

-Lil' Juanito, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We appreciate you sharing your experience with love at first sight. There are different stories and some have worked out, while others haven't. That's why we asked. So we could hear and you all could read the different experiences with this topic. And possibly gain a little more understanding on it.

Blessings

I found out I was pregnant not too long ago but the moment I found out I was pregnant I fell in love with my baby. No matter what people said, I knew what I was going to do, because I knew this was a blessing not a burden. This is going to change my life and I know it, but I'm willing to do anything and everything for my child.

To anyone in a similar situation I'll just tell you to always to put your child before yourself and do everything you can to be a good parent.

-Sugar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well, that's the right attitude. But we want to ask you to look around at all the women, young and old, in your life and ask yourself what you would do differently and what you would do the same? Being a mom is one of the hardest things in the world to be, but being a teen mom is even harder. You are in for one of the most difficult tests of your life. If you succeed, your success will be the most fulfilling thing. If you fail, you can destroy someone else's life. Now is the time to meditate and decide how you're going to do it.

Learned a Lot During Time Locked Up

I love being free as a bird, but when I got locked up, I ain't free as a bird. I'm more like a bird in a cage when I want to get out of jail but I can't.

I have to earn all of my credits around here that prove to staff that I'm not just doing my time here but using my time here to learn, because even though I never wanted to be here, I am already in jail — so now I have to prove myself to staff. I mean, I really wish that I never did any crimes because that's why I lost my independence. But when I get out, I am going to do the right thing out there. I have gained a lot from being in here, because I've experienced what it's like not to be free. I ain't free in here! I love being independent out there! I really miss being out there!

These months that I've been in here though, I've kept myself good with my peers and respectful to staff and everyone else. And when I met Ricardo in here, I realized he's the coolest kid I gotten to know so far — he's always laughing all the time just like I am. And we talk a lot, chill, joke, and even dance! We keep staying strong! When I feel down, Ricardo, he helps me out or tries to make me laugh. I feel better when I get happy being around Ricardo to help me out like that. He got my back, and I got his back, too! I feel like we are good buddies.

When I get out, I'll still hang out with Ricardo because he's a cool person (probably he is, he seems so). I'm gonna be staying out of trouble and get along with my life — no more crime! I'll never forget people who were here in jail. I have learned lots from them. I am thankful to Ricardo for his support. Thanks, buddy!

-Owan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like Ricardo aka Cookie is a good friend to you in here. Whether or not he can be a good friend to you on the outside depends on whether or not he's made up his mind as you have to do no more crime and to stay away from trouble altogether. Doing a good program and staying away from trouble on the outs, alas, are two different things — 'cause in here, staff is always watching over you, but out there you're often on your own with no one looking out for you or telling you what to do. And while that's the good part about being independent, it's the dangerous part, too, 'cause if you don't tell yourself the right thing to do — that independent freedom will eventually do you! So we hope you and Ricardo both do a good program and do what's right when you're out there doing your independent thing. Tell us, what gets you in trouble when you're on the outs? Cutting school? Doing drugs? Hanging with the wrong friends and following their lead? Wanting more than you have and just taking what isn't yours in order to get it? Or what? We only ask, because it's important for you to know what you have to watch out for when you're back out there trying to make good decisions.

It's All About Survival

"It's all about survival but jealous rivals is making it hard to do this. So everybody got a gun, but when we was young, the only weapons was two fists" — Mac Dre.

It is really sad in our society today for young juveniles like us, because we live in a life of hatred and crime. So many young kids is quick to pick up a gun, so quick to come up! But for a lot of us, that's just the life we have to live, because we had no one in our lives to lead us or guide us. But remember one thing: It's all about survival.

-Tp, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Survival is the bottom line, but success rise to another level in space and time. What helped you survive yesterday, may today lay you in your grave or condemn you to be the system's neo-slave. So even survival demands that you take a look at what you can change, 'cause if you stay the same, you'll keep on feeling this same old pain of judicial condemnation and extended incarceration. You'll old enough now to see through the lies on your own. You're old enough now to see your way to living a life in which you will be both grown up and free. Let it start today, seeing beyond yesterday to what you need to change not just to survive but insure success will be gained — to make tomorrow a better day!

My Life, My Life

my goal in life is to do good
and keep my goal and work on my anger
and don't flash and be more tense
and stay healthy and gain more weight
and talk more to my family
and be more responsible
and work on my attitude
and don't pay attention to nobody but myself
and get a car and work at footlocker

-Eesee. 150 Crew

From The Beat: So how can you slow yourself down when you feel that flash of anger? And how can you train yourself to feel it less often? It sounds like methods to reduce your tension would help. How do you do that? Exercise? Meditate? Pray? This is a cool list that shows your attitude has already improved, 'cause you're ready to start working on the things you need to do to succeed.

I Know First Hand, Juvenile Hall Is Not The Place

when I was younger, my mom told me my dad had came to juvenile hall for selling drugs. And this was before I was born, but it still affected me because he talked to me about it when I was old enough to understand and he told me he never wanted me to go to juvenile hall or jail.

This is my first time in here, but I hear my voice telling me how juvenile wasn't the place ever want me to be.

He came to visit me but when he first heard I was in here he said he didn't want anything to do with me but when he came and visited me he told me every body makes mistakes, that's how he ended up in there when he was younger. He told me I better do good in here and when I come out I better not come back in. He said he was kinda glad I experienced this because now I know what it's like and I'll do better and not come back.

If I were ever to bring a new life in to the world I would clean up my act real fast. You can't bring another life in the world if your still messing up in your own life. You wouldn't want your kids running the streets, running away etc. yes I can imagine myself bringing another life in the world. I would have to clean my life up (stop doing meth)

My definition of freedom: Being able to do what you wanna do.

-Jollian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're just going to repeat what we wrote to another girl on the issue of freedom, because this is an important distinction to make: Freedom is about being able to make the choices you want to make. But it doesn't mean you can rob an old lady because you feel like it, of course. That would be taking away her freedom to feel safe walking down the street. Freedom is a very complex idea. In society it is actually created by setting many rules, or laws, in place so that people can co-exist with freedom, but without infringing on other people's freedom. Have you ever done anything that has infringed on someone else's freedom?

Getting Locked Up!

I seen this dude that made me heat
So I ran up on him and broke his teeth
Then I got locked up and went to jail
But I want my life not to fail
But only to prevail

I think I'm getting out tomorrow
But if I don't , I'm gonna be in so much
sorrow

Because I love my life and my family
That's why I'ma stop sellin' that ecstasy
I always sleep lonely every night
But tonight I wish it was my last night
Locked up in a lonely place
Looking in the window and seeing my
face

Thinking about that I'm a disgrace

-Joseph B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Do you feel like a disgrace because you hit someone in the mouth? Because you sold ecstasy? Or because you got locked up? When you look back at this situation, what about it would you like to change? Whatever heated you up, couldn't you have handled it differently so that you would still be free and he would still have his teeth? The only way that freedom can work is to respect the next person's freedom. Do you?

Freedom To Me

What's good Beat? I been in and out of juvenile the whole past year! I'm actually getting transferred back to my county, Santa Clara! Every time I get my freedom from getting released I take it for granted and come back within a month. Well, I'm back!!

To me freedom is not just doing your own thing but being with people you love. I feel free when I'm with this one person, he makes me feel like I'm really someone. When I'm with him nothing can hurt us or just destroy us. When I'm with him I'm free!

This is the second time I've been taken by the law and left him out there. I know if I was sent far away I still wouldn't feel free 'cause I'm not with him. But to me being free is with something or someone you love. If love is your man or your lady etc... think about that when you get out, sometimes people really be taking that for granted and abusing it. I realized how much I really love something when its taking away from...

Well, I guess I'll write back to you when I get back to SCCJH.

-Baby G, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you feel you would be free if your man was locked up with you? We think you would still be lacking freedom. Freedom is about people, but it's also about self determination. Choosing what you want to do and doing it. This doesn't mean you can rob an old lady because you feel like it of course, because that would be taking away her freedom to feel safe walking down the street. Freedom is a very complex idea, that in society is actually created by setting many rules, or laws, in place so that people can co-exist with freedom, but without infringing on other people's freedom. Have you ever done anything that has infringed on someone else's freedom?

You Feel Me

mayne i done been through it
all locked up buryin' dog
but you ninjas ain't feelin' my pain
so i ain't messin' wit' y'all
i hope you can feel my pain
how i'm lost in the game
ninjas snitchin' all around me
tryin'a give up my name
i heard one ain't stayin' solid
so he changin' the game
they gave another one life
'cause he stayed true to the game
my brah isaac in rita tryin' to maintain
but he say he can't
because i'm goin' through this pain
that's true, i would of did the same thang
every time i go to court
they got me locked down in some chains
dad come see me every week sayin'
"son just change"
i turn around shake my head
"i'm too deep in the game"
but i wish i could change

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You never too deep 'till you're six feet under. People gon' be looking for your head, so it's no wonder you claim to be too deep — but packin' a gun ain't gon' protect you from a creep or get caught slippin' walkin' or drivin' down the street. So you might as well make up your mind that you won't go back to thuggin' on the grind, 'cause the sooner you get yourself up out that mix, the sooner you rise to the surface for air — 'cause we know you can't really breathe too well down there that deep. So just make up your mind and your dad's advice start to keep. Otherwise staying free will always be just an impossible dream.

Planned to Stay on the Run I'm Eighteen

What's poppin' Beat and Beat readers? This ya boy, Baby Jesus from Oakland. Yeah, I'm back in here, I just couldn't stay at ROP — but the worst part about it is: I caught another case! Hopefully Judge "K" will give me a blessing and send me to Camp or something — but we know that isn't going to happen! So if I do hit the Y, I hope they won't send me down south somewhere — 'cause if they do I'm definitely going to max-out my time surrounded by rivals like I will be down there!

I'm lightweight stressin' 'bout it. I thought I was going to be able to stay on the run until I was at least eighteen. That was my plan. I was going to turn myself in as soon as I hit eighteen, but flunk it — shhh happens! I was on the run for only about four months. What can I say but: They caught me slippin'! While I was on the run I couldn't get a (legit) job, so I had to make money somehow, right? Then I got arrested on the way to my house riding in a Cadi on deuces! And the only reason I got blurred was because I had my music on too loud! Man, I was hella mad! I was gettin' it out there though, I had damn near everything I needed except for a legit name!

The funny thing is that you would think I'd be more careful since I had a warrant, but I was doing even hotter stuff than ever! The way I was thinking about it was that I already had a warrant, so if I had any police contact, I was going down either way. Now I think about it, and I thank God I didn't get caught for a more serious case! Because I was really waking shhh up! Well, it's about that time to wrap this up, so till pencil meets paper!

To all out there, stand tall through it all and don't let nobody bring you down. To "Mike Jonez." — keep your head up, loved one and know that you're in my prayers! To all in Camp and other programs, stick with 'em so you can get back out there and do ya thang! Rest In Peace to all the fallen soldiers.

-Baby Jesus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: By the time you read this, you'll already have been in the max unit for a couple of weeks, 'cause we saw you there the Tuesday after you wrote this. So we guess you got the Y and not Camp or a group placement. Too bad, but now you'll just have to make the best of it. And we don't agree on the necessity of your maxing out your time, even if they do send you south. Yeah, it will be harder down there, but the crazy thing is that sometimes when things get harder, you find yourself doing better, rising to the challenge with all you've got. The biggest problem won't be your rivals but yourself and your old habits, your knee-jerk response as a so-called soldier. Maybe there was a time when your affiliation really did serve you, but if so, that time's over — now you just serve some leadership so far away that you've never even met them and won't meet them unless you land in the Pinta. So put all that on the down low. We're not saying become a snitch or a fake, just give all that "in your face" a rest, 'cause it's immature at best. Your plan to be on the run till you turn eighteen made some kind of sense, but then being on the run means you make your money with criminal intent — and the longer you do that (and appear to succeed) the more your judgment gets bent, till you start to act like an untouchable demon, acting as bold (= stupid) as if you were just dreamin'. Once you're acting like that, you're time is about up — and yeah, you're lucky you got caught up for nothing serious, 'cause rolling down that road you just get more delirious, doing whatever. The lesson this teaches, is that when you get out, no compromising schemes, no halfway measures, or you'll slip back into dreams of anything goes in pursuit of treasures. It ended bad this time, next time it will end worse — so start pursuing that legitimate life to achieve the happiness you deserve. Start it in the Y, enroll in every single program that catches your eye — stay busy, learn some skills, and time will pass fast; then after your release, apply the same attitude to pursue legitimate cash.

"Keep Your Head Up"

"Keep your head up" is what Tupac said, and that's how you should take this jail time.

Many people come to jail and lose focus, and can't keep their head up. When I start walking wit' my head down I know I'm slipping. I instantly put my head up and smile even if I feel like crap. Fo' real.

Many times girls are caught for prostitution, and come in here and give up. An it's all-bad. But they can't blame the' self, they sell that great body for a reason.

Basically to everybody keep your head. And never let any situation get the best of you.

-Stank, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We thank you for the encouraging words. Isn't it sad however when a young female has to sell her body? Even if it is for a reason that they feel will justify what they do? Isn't there another way of doing things? What if it was your little sister, how would you feel? We believe you meant well, but the way it was said and the words used seemed to justify their actions. We hope that's not the case because you sound more caring and smarter than that.

Where Drugs Have Taken Me

The worst place drugs have taken me is in here. It wasn't really drugs, but alcohol. I was drinking and bad stuff ended up happening. I wasn't really drinking a lot, but I was feeling it... enough to change my thinking, and now I'm in here. I ended up getting arrested for a serious charge. I received a break and am getting a juvenile disposition. I am waiting to see what happens.

-Big D, Santa Cruz
From The Beat: We're sure you're going to do your own thinking from now on, without any assistance from alcohol. We wish you the best.

This I Believe

I believe that women in this century will change the world in major ways. More people are having girl babies than boys these days. Also, women mature faster and their minds are, I think, more advanced. But, I can't speak for everyone and I'm not saying that boys or men are dumb.... This is just my opinion.

I believe that there will be a woman president for the United States within the next eight years. I kind of want to be the person because I do have a lot of views on life and how to improve for the better America's tax dollars, meant for not only people in America, but worldwide.

I also believe that we should legalize prostitution, but we should organize businesses that support it. I don't believe in women/men walking on the street at night, because it is dangerous. That's why I believe prostitution, if legalized in California, should be organized, much like a strip club. I believe that it is not fair for girls to get locked up for prostitution if the cops or the judge or any man in a high state of the law, would indeed purchase one of these women on the streets, off duty or whenever. You feel me?

-Sassy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sassy, you have many high ideas and aspirations. We will try to respond to them piece by piece. We hope that women will change the world in many ways. God knows change is needed. Your prediction about a woman president may be right. It looks like Hillary Clinton will be seeking the Democratic nomination, and she very well may get it. A woman president would be an important step for a country that has only ever had white male leaders. It is a high aspiration to want to be president, we wish you the best of luck. However, it is law that to run for president, you must be at least 35 years of age. As far as legalizing prostitution so that girls don't have to walk the streets. This is an idea that would save many lives. It would probably also involve enforcing many health standards not in place. For example, prostitutes would have to get checked for HIV and other venereal diseases regularly. This would help them keep healthy as well as lowering risk factors in spreading diseases. But most importantly, it would help protect prostitutes by law from being the victims of violent crimes, like rape.

Today's My Birthday

What's up wit' it Beat. This yo' boy young T-face and I have a New Years revolution. It's not to be in here for another one of my birthday's. Because it's hard to be away from your family on a day like this one, 11-28-06. It's my birthday and I'm in jail.

If I could have been with my mom and sister's today, I think I would of felt much better. I would have had a good, home cooked meal from my family and have received gifts. I also would have been with my friends hanging out, and I would've seen my girlfriend too.

That's all now I'm out.

-Young T-Face, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know exactly what you missed out on. And we hope you know exactly what you need to do in order to not miss out on any more birthdays. Happy (B-Lated) Birthday. Hopefully this is the last time we have to wish you this through The Beat.

I Believe I Am Successful

i believe that i am successful
because i'm outgoing and smart
and very ambitious
i get good grades
i get along well with good people
i have a great attitude with people
i am also having conversations with good people
i believe that i am successful
because i'm good with my hands, heart and brain

-T'shayla, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It does sound like you're successful in school and like you're doing a successful program here in the Hall, but something you chose to do got you locked up in here, too. All we're trying to say is don't let your success be an excuse to do those things that also set you up to fail. Stay away from trouble and stay away from juvenile jail.

I Believe I'll Meet My Cousin' Again

I believe that my cousin' is not dead.
That he is still with me, telling me to lets do good on one.
I believe that he is still telling me that I should do good in
school.

I believe that my cousin' did not have to die.
He should've let him live longer. They should not have shot
him.

I believe God should not take him to heaven.
I believe that my cousin' was not a gang member.
He was a good person. He was my best friend.

I need my cousin' back. I don't feel good.

I feel like without my cousin' I am nothing.

So I believe I will be with my cousin' in heaven one day too.
I love you Fatboy. We going to meet again. RIP Fatboy.

-Lil' Sammy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can feel your pain and your loss through your words. Our condolences are with you and family. Your may be right when you say you can hear your cousin telling you to do good in school. It sounds like you and your cousin had a real close, strong bond. And it sounds like your cousin wanted the best for you. It's up to you to now live for your cousin. Use him as your motivation. Thank you for sharing and continue to do what your cousin would've wanted you to do. Which we believe is good and positive.

What Would I Do?

If I had to do hella long in jail I would have a different
perspective on life.
I wouldn't feel the same knowing it will be hella long before
I get out.

I would feel like all hope is gone like there is no point of lying.

I wouldn't care for nothing.
Life wouldn't even matter to me.
But then again somewhere down the line I would get over it
and make the best
of the situation and know no one brought it on myself but
me.

So now I will have to deal with it and take responsibility for my actions.

But I still will feel very bad for being in jail for very long.
I have even had the thought about it not seeing my friends
or family for so long

don't be able to be free. I really don't know what I would do.

-Anonymous, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well, a couple things about this. It's very mature of you to recognize that you would go through a cycle of emotions, starting with despair and then acceptance and then regret. We suspect you know this because you've already had a shorter cycle in juvenile hall that produced the same emotions. You already have had a small taste of what it will be like if you don't fly straight and stay out of the slammer. The second thing we want to address is when you say that you would have to get over it because you would have brought the situation on yourself. We want you to think about that in the context of society, including race, poverty, education, privilege, etc. You do not exist in a vacuum. Everything that you go through is in relation to others and to the environment you are in. How do you think that has affected your life? Tell us.

I Thought I Knew You But, It's My Baby Daddy?

I thought I knew my ninja but I guess I was just dreaming. When I had his lil' girl who is only eight months old, that must have been when I thought I knew you and maybe that was true. But I guess I just don't know that at all so I was just wrong to think I knew you. But I didn't know you until that day you got me sent to the halls with your drugs on me.

So now I'm in jail because I thought I knew you. Now I know that I was wrong and I'm here doing time and you is not doing your time. I am a solid ass brezzzy for my baby daddy.

-Baby Gurl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The problem with being in a situation as complicated as yours (being a teen mom with a baby-daddy who is probably very young as well) is that you are still growing up and figuring out who you are. You're too young to have a baby, but it's too late for that now. How many teen parents do you think stay together? We're betting very, very few. So if you're relying on your baby daddy to do the right thing just because he's the father of your child, DON'T, because he probably won't come through. Right now you need to take care of yourself and your baby, and you need to really think about the decisions you make before you make them, because those decisions don't just effect you an more, they affect a tiny little baby who relies on you.

I failed my pee test, and I didn't even smoke nothin'! And I'm not the first person it's happened to!

Tonight

Tonight I search the skies
In hope to find a star
A promise made from far away
To locate where you are
A comfort zone when you're alone
No other man will find
They taste the fruits of paradise
But fail to feed your mind
Tonight I search the skies to find
My agony won't hide
Within my deepest thoughts I cry
These tears of lonely times
Whatever will became of us
I wonder to the moon
Will I be blessed at last possess
The pleasure found with you
Unique and rare, so hard to find
Someone to trust for life
Foreplay is a must for us, plus I'll love you right
Don't blush from words of truth
Ask yourself, "Is he for real?"
Free to search my soul and hear
Now tell me if you feel me

-Young Sparkie B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Let the promise of this unfulfilled love motivate you not just to get out of this situation, but to find a way to stay out of situations like this so that you can spend uninterrupted time together, learning who you are and developing your love in freedom.

Restricted For Two Weeks

What's crackin' Beat? This Tony from Camp. I'm hella mad because on my first HV, I got restricted for two weeks. So if you are comin' up here, don't argue to staff about your test — because it will only make it worse! To all in the Hall, stay up. Do yo' time and get back to y'all 'hood.

I failed my pee test, and I didn't even smoke nothin'! And I'm not the first person it's happened to! The test showed both lines, but it was faded a lil' bit, and that's normal. Then they said that it was dirty! I made a big deal over it, and that just made it all worse. So if you come up here, be careful how you talk to staff, 'cause if you try to prove something to them that you know is right, it might just get worse for you!

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can't say it's fair, but we can say that you learned an important lesson. Also we thank you for passing it along to any of our readers headed for the Camp, 'cause it's only natural to argue what you know is true — but wisdom now tells you that at Camp it is not the thing to do. Getting through Camp is not about arguing over what is fair and what is not, but showing that you can accept authority whether they're right or not. And truth to tell, the same thing can happen in the real world of work and school — getting all hot-headed can just thing's worse. That doesn't mean there's no difference between wrong and right, live right! But when a figure of authority gets you wrong, losing your composure just makes it harder to get along. So stay strong and move on.

2007: Time For Change

the year of two thousand seven
will be different from two thousand six
because i'm going to stay out of trouble
and i will have a job
and be getting good grades
i will be a better man
and i will have a car
and i will be in the twelfth grade
— going to school
two thousand six i was always in trouble
— not going to school
i was going to the hall
and not listening to nobody but
now it's time for change

-Lil' Tae, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What can we say? It's a beautiful day, even incarcerated if you can make these promises that we pray are fated to become facts. 'Cause this is no place to be, and you don't need to come back. You've got a good plan — now stick to that. But don't kid yourself and play the so-called square thug, 'cause if you go back to daily doing drugs and cuttin' classes, you'll be stuck like Chuck locked up with the other half-ashes. When you go free, go free to stay, Lil' Tae.

Want My Mom to Laugh

the things i live for are so insane
but i still do it even though all it brings is pain
i don't know why i go that way
or live that life each and every day
my life is like a puzzle but all the pieces are not there
people try to take advantage of me and that's not fair
but i will never go out to anyone 'cause i really just don't care
me and my lil' brother are both locked down
and i'm mad because i want my mom to laugh not frown
but she will laugh again once we both touch down
touch down hit the streets and terrorize the town

-Lil' Tb, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ah, you almost think your way out of the insanity that has your mother dropping tears too plentifully, but then you slip right back again at your poem's last line at the end. 'Cause if you hit the streets and terrorize the town, your mom might even laugh for a minute if she doesn't realize how deep you got yourself in it while the money flows — but the tears will fall again when you get caught by five-oh or floored by a bullet to your chest or your dome. If you go back to the same ol' same, you've already gone out to the same ol' pain, and guaranteed your mother will be hurting again. So don't get mad at the player, get mad at the game, and quit living your life like you're straight-up insane, 'cause you deserve better than a shackles and chains. So does your mama, so drop all this stupid drama.

I Believe In Jesus

I believe when I get out of here I can do something
better with my life, feel me.
I believe I didn't have to do the stuff I did to come
here in the first place.
I believe that the police did not have to pull me over.
You know what else I believe?
I believe they don't have to take a youngster to jail,
who's trying to make it, get something to eat, yaw'
know make a little money.
I believe this is the wrong place for everybody to be
right now.
I believe they don't need to send me to the "Y" or
send me back to a group home.
I can make the right decision to stay out of here, feel
me!
Damn, I believe everybody feels a different way, but
everybody does want to get out of here.
I believe everybody can stay strong, keep their head
up and do what they need to do to make it further in
life
I believe!

-Lil' Dirt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope the judge has as much faith in you as you do, and as The Beat does. We hope they hand you a good opportunity, and you make the most of it!

Independent Since Age 12

Independence is when you do stuff on your own, like
bein' an "adult." I have been independent for a long time
now, since I was 12 years old.

Now I am 17 years old. I've bought my clothes, food,
shoes, and multiple cars. If you ask me I done pretty
well bein' independent.

When I get out of here, I'm goin' to be on my own
again, this time wit' my girl in an apartment, this is
going to be my first time in an apartment actually by
myself with my girl. I think it's going to be a good thing
for us.

-Rj, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Since you were 12? That sounds like an incredible story – both for the hard parts and the ways in which you must have had to grow up – fast. How did it happen? How did you support yourself? We're glad to hear that you have taken care of yourself – but of course we do have that fear that you might not have planning on continuing to make your money legally. If you earn from crime, you might find yourself dependent on the mercy of the system... so tell us this, how do you plan to continue taking care of yourself while also doing what it takes to get a legit job that can keep you truly independent?

With Eyes I Can See

when i look into your eyes
i see belief
when i look into your eyes
i see love
when i look into your eyes
i see unique feeling
when i look into your eyes
i see details
when i look into your eyes
i see me
i see intelligence love respect
and encouragement
i see me
i see jermaine

-Jermaine, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yeah! When we look into your poem, we see the same characteristics you see looking into the mirror alone. Now make your vision a dynamic reality after your release, don't go back to the street game seeking fast money and brief fame. 'Cause now you know what you really get is long-term pain. So look deep into the eyes of Jermaine, and when you're set free, use your time productively — so successful and free you remain!

I Believe

I believe I can fly when I'm high!
I believe I can quit the drugs
I believe I can get out the hall and straighten my life
I believe I can get out and have a successful life
I believe I can graduate from high school
I believe I can reach to be a millionaire
I believe I can be the first Mexican president
I believe I'm gonna be able to see my R.I.P. Nono in the after
life
I believe

-Droopy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We believe in you too! Remember in order to fulfill these dreams you do have to take a serious step in leading a productive life, not a life that gets you locked up! What will it take for you to become the first Mexican president.

The Worst Place Drugs Have Ever Taken Me Is...

The worst place drugs have taken me is the halls. Because I
couldn't stop smoking weed at the time I thought it was cool
but in the end I was just being the fool. I know that not getting
high and not selling drugs was the best thing I ever had done
now I'm thinking straight. I've got back into shape. And I can
finish my boxing career and my rapping career. I got a lot more
wind even though I'm facing consequences.

I hope I get released next week but most likely I'm getting
sentenced to Camp Sweeney. I'm just gonna do what I got to
do to finish the program so I can finish on with my rapping
career.

-Rheum, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We will buy your first album! It's so great that you have dreams to follow. Tell us more about your boxing too. What type of discipline must one have to box?

Why Does a Female

What it do, Beat? This is yo' boy. Who? Mike Jonez. You see
it. But yeah, I want to talk to you about femlaes. Well, about
them. Why do they lie and to the opposite of wha tyou want
them do?

Why does a female say "I love you too" just because you said
it?

Why does a female go and do whatever she wants because
her ninja locked up?

Why does a female say she's gon' be there for you when she's
not?

Why does a female expect you to trust her when every time
she promises you something she breaks it/

Why does a female think you write hella girls when you
locked up?

Why does a female cheat on her ninja?
Does it make her feel better?

Why do females say they have more important things to do
then write you?

Why does a female say she's faithful when she ain't?
Not to get it wrong, some females are faithful.

Why does a female hang up on the phone with you without
sayin' I love you or 'bye?

-Mike Jonez, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We don't have an answer for you on this heartbreaking poem, we wish we did. Even more than the questions, we hear the pain of someone trying to make a relationship work under trying circumstances – you with the stress of your case, her with the pain of not knowing when she'll be with you again, plus all the ordinary stress of trying to get through day to day in the world...Plus you want to watch out for her and protect her from harm, but if she's bent on trouble, there's nothing you can do to protect her. The one thing we got curious about was, what would this poem look like if she were writing it? What would she say? It would start off "Why does a ninja...." Maybe that would help you see what is happening in the heart of this girl you care about so much.

Drugs Took Me To The Hospital

The worse place drugs have ever taken me is the hospital, which came with a wild story... One day I was sittin' in a scraper wit' my ninjas on, and we had a half of a zip, some drink with three pills in it. We was all chillin' in the cuts across the street from Berkeley High. We kept seeing this lady who kept coming out on her porch, but we was so high that we wasn't even trippin'.

Five minutes later we see the police coming down the street with they sirens on. We super paranoid so first thing we do is get out and break. Well my boy tried to get out and run across the street but the police car hit him.

Within an hour we was all at the hospital to see if he was gon' make it or not. He eventually got better but the point is that it wouldn't have happened if we wasn't getting high.

I still choose to smoke but every time I do I always think back to that day, and just a hint of fear that is unknown comes to my heart.

-Young Burna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's incredibly lucky that your boy made it through the ordeal. And it made us think about one of the dangers of smoking weed (and drinking for that matter)... which is that even across from a High School, the cuts are dangerous, and either enemies or police can come and try to take you down, in a hard world, it's best to be at 100 percent, to have your wits about you so you never get caught unawares. We wondered, reading this finely written and frightening piece, just how many other young people have been hurt or worse because they were drunk or high, and didn't have that necessary 100 percent to keep them safe.

I been on my own or "independent" for six years ever since I was nine years old.

To My Grandma

i tried once, sometimes maybe even twice but tryin'a figure out my grandma is like a game of dice she's in a good mood, she's in a bad one all of a sudden because there's loud noise in the house all three of her grandkids fussin'

most of the time, she's a great grandma to be around driving me and my friends from town to town going to theme parks and stopping to eat at wendys or she takes the whole family to a all-night restaurant like dennys

she has a great smile and never likes to be in the house she likes to take trips with her grandkids and husband — now that's what love's all about granny granny is what her grandkids call her we loved her yesterday, we love her today and tomorrow she takes her time out of her day to help us get through life she sticks up for us and never backs down from a fight from education to manners and work, what she teach me if i had a million dollars to give her, it wouldn't mean nothing

she's your friend, your cousin, your lady, your mother but to me she's my granny and i love her i love you granny always

-Lil' Larry, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We'd say from reading this paean, that what you understand best about your grandma is the love you're seein'! It sounds like she can get moody, and with a house full of kids acting all crazy and hoody, who can blame her? Better behavior on your part just might tame her. But it sounds like the love is bottomless, endless, and beyond all this trouble, 'cause we're guessing as much as you love your granny — she loves you double. So we suggest, now that you're older you do your best to make her life easier, so she can take some rest at least in her mind, even if she'll never just sit down and let time fly. But now we don't mean for you to hit the grind, 'cause that money is wrong kind and will only lead you to be confined behind locked doors if it doesn't have you dying in the street — and neither of those consequences are what your granny needs to see. So show your love by living your life right and staying free.

One And Two

1. I Believe

I believe I can fly

I believe I can get high

I believe all my ninjas should be free

I believe I should be back on them streets

I believe you gon' rest in peace someday

I believe ninjas can't mess with me or my homies

I believe I can get out the hood

I believe the world is too good.

I believe I'm gonna live to be an OG

I believe the police out there to get me

I believe I can stay out the system

I believe my life is like a twister

I believe ninjas is straight poodles

I believe I got to eat

I believe that's why I got to have money

I believe I got to smoke grapes

I believe I'm always gonna be from the bay.

Get at me....

2. Stay Fresh

I got to stay fresh

always wearin' my teflon vest

ninjas wanna put me to rest

'Cause they know I'm the best

I got to stay fresh

Watch out for squares

they plotting to get me

'cause they know I eat nothing but macaroni

I got to stay fresh

always parking, stay smacking

rapping and blapping

I got to stay fresh

'cause that's what I got

Oakland

that will do nothing but get ya

I gotta stay fresh, stay away from haters

I gotta stay fresh

-Lil' Suave, 150 Crew

From The Beat: And WE believe that there is a lot more to you than this poem shows. It comes out, in a line here or there in your other writing, where you let something real come through, something about how you want a better life than the one you have right now, about how you feel about being stuck in court, about your mom, about what you see on the streets. This here feels a little like a mask — just like the mask detainees will wear in the unit to make it seem like it's all good, even if they have major stress in their lives. Come on now. You write about being fresh, but lines like "I got to smoke grapes?" "Ninjas" is poodles?" are straight stale. And you have so much voice and cleverness in you, you don't need to settle for stale. Nice effort, which we all know you are capable of, is when you say things that only YOU could say, from your own point of view, and experience. Give us something from the heart, Suave, not from your shining surfaces.

On My Own

What it do Beat? This is Derrick. Tonight I am going to talk about being independent. I think that being independent means to do for yourself. It's like having a job, having money, basically making your own choices in life.

I been on my own or "independent" for six years ever since I was nine years old. My family situation wasn't always the best so most of the time I did for myself. It taught me how to fend for myself early. It's like learning to survive. It's like emancipation but different, that's all I got say till rest time. Peace.

-Derrick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's great that you feel strong in your independence, but we're sorry you don't have the family support a child needs to live out his childhood. You deserve some support! We are impressed by your strength — and hope you can get out and stay free.

I Thought I Knew You, But....

I thought I knew you, but now I know I'm wrong.
You got me put in jail when I known you for a long time.

I thought I knew you, but I didn't know you at all.
You were there when I caught that robbery case by the mall.

I thought I knew you, but it was a stupid thought to think.
I thought I knew myself but how could I be so blind.

-Tyisha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes we really believe in people because we love them, and we think that we can rely on them as much as we know we would let them rely on us. But sometimes we also have to learn the hard way that everyone has a different set of contexts and experiences. That person might care about you, but s/he doesn't know how to act, because no one ever set a good example for him/her. You have to know what you're willing to put up with and what you expect of your friends. Sometimes that means cutting someone off that you love.

For Some Funny Reason

I believe that I will see my mother again even now that she's gone
I believe that my freedom will come sooner or later even though my case is bad

I believe that the war will never end for some funny reason.

-Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The war might not end but you can lessen your chances of being a casualty in it. What do you think, Dionte... can you escape this war, or are you trapped in it as well?

I Miss You, Baby

i miss you baby, my sweet lady
missing your love and thinking of you daily
i'm trying to be strong and hold on
but my right is being confused for wrong
you still are my great, and i miss those plates
cornbread, collard greens, chicken and steaks
you always could throw down in the kitchen
oh — there's something i forgot to mention
you're that love i'll remember
from the first of january to the end of december
so be encouraged and let time fly by
i love when you say it i'm your little guy
love — you — mom

-Andre, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Everyday is Mother's Day if you're in touch with your need to repay that endless and eternal love that got shown since you descended from above to be born into this world of labor and pain. Yeah, she been feeding you since you were a baby, but you went insane out on the street till maybe she feared you'd never find your way back. But this poem is a promise to her that you will be more than that when you get back home, 'cause now you've sworn your love and devotion in this poem.

Love Who

love me or who i am not for what i do
love me not my money
love my intelligence not my stupidity
love me not no one else
love me like mickey and minnie
take me somewhere in love's world that will have me
spinning
love my independence
love will come some day
— and that day is today
because i love myself and that's a start
of the changes i can make with love in my heart

-Jermaine, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's true that when you can start loving you — loving yourself for all the right reasons instead of all the wrong reasons — you've already paved the way that will take you straight to that better day that you deserve to see, Jermaine.

Love At First Sight!

i believe in love at first sight
because the person i'm with now
i fell in love with her the first time i seen her
i knew i was in love with her
because when i looked at her
i caught this feeling in my body and i froze
and started staring at her
it all started at school
when she was passing out papers for the teacher
and she walked to my side
of the table to give me mine
and that's when i made my move
my first approach to her was
“hi, how you doing —
what's your name, how old is you
my name is demarcus, can i be your friend”
and ever since then we been together
we been together for almost a year now

-Demarcus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's not how eloquent you make your first call, 'cause when it feels real it takes courage to say anything at all. It's not the words you spoke, but maybe the look in your eye that broke the news — “I'm already in love with you!” Of course, that feeling can pass pretty darn fast, or, when it's heard and reciprocated over time — it can last: love at first sight can turn out wrong, or for the lucky few like you, it can turn out right!

This I Believe

I'm getting out in a week and I'm gonna have some legal fun with my woman. You know how it goes.

It's crazy to think that some of the folks in here won't get that chance any time soon. It must suck, not being able to tell what your future's going to be. That's not the way I wanna go, but whatever happens, I deal with it. No more juvy. Straight to County next time, so that's something to think about.

-Na, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Yes, it is. We hope your 'belief' comes true and that you learn how to take care of business 'legally' as you would say. Have you thought about how you'll change your behavior?

i love myself and that's a start
of the changes i can make
with love in my heart

In My Mind

In my mind I'm older than I really is
In my mind my mother is still alive to me
In my mind God is my leader and my everything
In my mind, love my family is my world.

-Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's amazing how much heart can be packed into just four lines. Goes to show, it's not how long you talk, it's what you say. Now, having it in your mind — love, maturity, faith — is the first and hardest step. But what about putting those three things into how you deal with your daily life? Do you do that?

"Jus' Do Me"

the worst place drugs
ever take me is when
ecstasy get me
in the wrong state of mind
to where i wanna be
hella bad —
hyphy, fightin', robbin'
basically it makes me
thizz, act crazy, and
"jus' do me"

-Joslyn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Who wrote this? You! When you pop an e-pill that's not you, even if it makes you feel like Super-U — 'cause that's really the problem. You are wonderful, unique, amazing, just being you. But when you think you're Super-U, you're screwed. You've just given one of the clearest explanations of ecstasy can do — and it's not "I jus' do me" but more like "E jus' do me" again!

Part 2: My Partner Bo-Bo

Man I wish that Bo-Bo was still here with us. My ninja died over just driving by Mac (McClymonds) High School and got hit by the school bus. Damn I wish he didn't die over that crash. I wish he recovered from that hit and I wish he was with me right now. I wish he could just chill with us, love you bra, rest in peace.

-Lil' Javi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've lost too many friends. That's a lot of sadness to carry around. Thank you for writing about it. Did you go to Mac High?

He died over something stupid
just going into a store in another
neighborhood. I wish he could
come back home, I miss him. Love
you Ant. RIP Anthony!

Part 1: RIP Ant

Man my patna Anthony didn't have to die. Man I miss my patna. Man we used to do hella stuff together on our block. Man I want to slap somebody, I just couldn't believe it. I remembered when he used to hit me in front of my apartment, when they used to shoot dice with his best friend my brother and all my other brothers. He died over something stupid just going into a store in another neighborhood. I wish he could come back home, I miss him. Love you Ant. RIP Anthony!

-Lil' Javi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We are so sorry for the loss of your Ant, RIP. How can we overcome these senseless crimes? Dream! Tell us what you would like to see in an ideal world? What will you do to make your life more fulfilling? What is your plan?

Life Can ...

life can take its toll
life can get old
life can make you become cold
life can make you wanna kill
life can make you pop pills
life can put you through the same old drill
life can make your heart spin like a ferris wheel
that's life —
life can make a man take over you
to the point where he'll be controlling you
to the point where you can't turn back
'cause you might get smacked
or shot in yo' back
life is — life is crazy
'specially for young ladies
hoes thirteen to sixteen
dope fien's all in between
trying to do extra to get a little green
life can — life will put you to the test
life can put you to rest
life can make you feel a hole in yo' chest
life will make you do things
strange things, crazy things
make yo' heart wanna scream
life can land you in the hall
in a room with four white walls
no drank, no blunt, no ninja, no nothin'
life is — sho' is crazy

-Joslyn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Now it's time for you to take control, 'cause givin' it up to some man that will smack you 'cause he can, is getting way past old. Yeah, life can do you wronger than wrong even when you're stronger than strong — until you make a clear decision that you're no longer willing to go along. You don't need to find a way to walk out on him now, okay? 'Cause here you are locked up far away for more than a few short days. If he's still out there, we guarantee he'll soon have someone else suffering his mean stare which he'll package and sell up front as "I really care" and "success, I can take you there" — but you know those lies go nowhere but tear-stained fancy clothes at best. So it's time to give that so-called high life a rest. 'Cause you don't need to kill anybody anymore than you need to pop pills in your body so you don't even know how bad you really feel — 'cause e-pills make you feel happy for a minute but it's not real, and you go right ahead making your life worse and worse still, thinking it's all good 'cause you're flying high through the 'hood. But as high as you go, that's how far you fall when you hit the floor. So now is the time to make up your mind: "No more!" Pick yourself up, and when temptation knocks, lock the door to your heart and mind, or else stay locked behind these county doors until you go right back to where you were before. Nah, you know better, fa show!

Part 3: My Cousin Gus

I wish my cousin was here. Man he got killed over being with the wrong people but I know now that he's in heaven. He's looking down at me and Grandma and all the other people that he loved. I wish I could see him right now before he got shot in the head by his one friend/one cousin. Man I wish he was here. Love you forever.

-Lil' Javi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's not right, it's not fair. It's ugly. It's hate. Where's the love? Where is the strength to simply walk away when problems arise? The streets are sick, and we need a cure! Do you know what the cure is? The cure for you is to be smart, think before you react and stay away from drama and hate!

life will make you do things
strange things, crazy things
make yo' heart wanna scream

2007/2006

2006 was a bad year.
For one, I lost two of my homies.
For two, my girl killed my baby.
And I wasn't eating this year.
Man I feel like this '07 is my year.
I can feel it in the air, like Beanie Siegel.
This '07 is more dough to blow and if you ain't gone
ride fly,
then you might as well hate.
I gotta eat even tho' I ain't hungry.
It ain't my birthday but I got my name on the cake.
Every step I take I can feel my homies watching my
every step.
This year was hella bootsie.
I went to R.O.P. and it was just hella weak.
I'll make a promise to my fallen homies,
I'm gone give '07 a bang for them.
I'm 'bout to be eighteen in a couple of months.
So it's cookies without the milk.
Meaning everybody who lost they lives this year, stay
solid in peace. Rest in peace fallen homies.

-P-Stank

From The Beat: Hopefully 2007 will be different for you. You've lost a lot and now that you'll be 18 you stand to lose a lot more. We hope that you give yourself a real chance and not do as an adult, what you did as a juvenile.

I Believe

I believe that jail is not a good place for kids 'cause when we go to jail we miss lots of school and we don't get to see our parents for a while. Some people are in jail for the holidays, and that they should be home celebrating with their families.

-Kid

From The Beat: What do you think the long-term effect of jail is on kids? Does it help you not want to make "mistakes" again, or does it make you more likely to have problems? What is your plan to stay out when you return home?

People Who Believe In Me

I believe in God, my family and myself. Because that's the people who believe in me.

-True Believer

From The Beat: That's pretty straight forward. There are others who believe in you as well.

You

You popped in from out of nowhere brightened up my time

Made me have a whole new perspective on life
you made me want to be a better person, not the one
I used to be

I wanna do better not just for you but for me
I never thought a female could make me feel this way
Cause begin a female myself in this society makes it
not so easy

I cant wait to get out an really to know you cause
what I learned from your time shared with me is your
more than what you make it be.

-Gabriel

From The Beat: Sometimes you need to see your value through someone else's eyes to understand it yourself. Women are taught to think they are inferior, that they can't do as much, that they're not worth as much. But that is garbage. You need to say to yourself: I am woman, hear me roar!

The Worst

The worst place drugs have ever taken me is the halls because I'm so far away from my family and I hurt so many people that care about me.

-Kevin

From The Beat: So can you stop doing drugs? Is that what you want, and do you feel like you can? Sometimes it's easy to want something and harder to do it. What's your plan?

Changing

i don't like to be in juvenile hall
i'm trying to be out as soon as possible
so i can be at my house with my family
and go to work so i can be
helping my mom
by paying rent and a lot other things
and when
i get out i'm going to do the best i can
so i won't be back
because i already learned my lesson

-Carlos

From the Beat: Yes, Carlos, judging from what you say, you've learned your lesson and already come a long way toward setting things right. 'Cause the first thing you need is a good plan, and you seem to understand that money off the street won't really help give your mom what she needs — a Carlos who's out and free and earning money legally!

Where Drugs Took Me

The worst place drugs have taken me was to ecstasy. The weed made me feel so good the first time. I wish that I never smoked weed. I would probably be on my way to college right now.

One time I drank too much and passed out on the street. My friend tried to help me up and they couldn't. They went to get my mother and she thought I was dead. I went to the hospital and they pumped my stomach. That's the type of places the drugs take you.

-Manny

From The Beat: Damn, we're sorry that BS tried to steal your future. You deserve so much more. Tell us this, if drugs take you to those kinds of places, where would NOT doing drugs (or drinking) take you? In the short run, we know you'd miss out on fun, but no way would you have less fun than in the hall. Write a piece, for us or for yourself about where you could go if you didn't let them steer you off your path.

I Believe

i believe i can fly
when i'm high
i believe i can quit drugs
i believe i can get my
high school diploma
i believe i can succeed
i believe in me

-Ohibelieve

From The Beat: Again, much here that's good, but when you withhold your name, we wonder if you can say no to your peers when they say, "Let's fly high." It's one thing to believe you can quit drugs and another thing to actually do it. Show us! Prove it. Do it, get your degree and succeed in life. Aight?

My Plans For Now and the New Year

First of all "que onda" to all "que estan torcidos" — keep your head up, chest out! For this new year, I want to get a job and a car. And I want to start paying my restitution, 'cause I owe a lot — and I mean a lot!

I'm 'bout to go to a group home up in San Jose, so I can't wait until I get picked up and go on my group home pass! I'm going to spend my time with my.

I don't want to do no more time — so I'll keep it cool. No more stolos for me! Well, hopefully I won't write to The Beat behind these Juvenile walls anymore. So, with that said: Alrato y trucha!!

-Dimples

From The Beat: Your plan to keep it cool, so you don't have to write again in The Beat how you feel like a fool for getting caught up for stupid stuff all over again. Remember that when it comes to stolos, it's like an addiction. Therefore, "One is too many, and a thousand never enough!" You feel? Don't take the first one and you won't get caught up for taking the last one. As for hanging with the homies, well, choose your friends well, 'cause some don't care if you got to jail or to hell as long as your ride by their side.

Tryin' To Go Home

Hey Beat! This is Rascal over here waiting to see what the judge is going to do.

They're either gonna try to send me to Camp or out of state — and I'm just tryin' to go home to see my family! But maybe I need one of these programs to get my head straight. So I pray for the best.

Well, until pen meets paper — alrato!

-Rascal

From the Beat: Praying for what's best while recognizing (from the decisions you've made in the past) that you don't know what's best — is a deep and powerful prayer. Keep praying it, and we guarantee, with that frame of mind, your prayer will be answered. We recommend, however, that you pray as if it all depends on God and act as if it all depends on you!

Words to the Wise

I believe that there is nothing guaranteed in life but death.

-Funk

From The Beat: These are good words to live by. We took it as, there is nothing you can take for granted in this world, and anything you want you have to work for, and even then you might not get it... How does this way of seeing affect how you live in the world?

Don't Like Halls

the reason i don't like the halls
is because there are a lot of suckas
that know they are suckas
and they be fronting soon as they
come to this mutha
that's why i just hold it down
and stay solid to the fullest

-Lil' Cliff

From The Beat: If you don't like coming to juvenile halls, why you keep setting yourself up for these falls. Maybe 'cause you call it "holding down your turf" — but it's you yourself getting held down by a curse. And until you change your ways, your life will keep getting worse and worse, if you don't die first. No diss intended, but facing the truth is strongly recommended before your chances to change and remain alive and free have all ended.

A Prayer to God

god i pray you take
care of my family
i can take care
of the rest

-Rascal

From The Beat: Pray for all, including your enemies to change how they think, feel and do, but don't wait for them to change before you. To love your enemy as you love yourself, you have to show yourself some love first — or else your pun on taking care of them will take care of you, too, in the end. So let the change start, and when you ask God to take care of your family — do your part!

I'm a Good Cook

i believe i'm a good cook
because i can cook anything
lasagna, green beans, gumbo
steak, baked chicken, fried chicken
you name it, i can cook it in the kitchen

-T'shayla

From The Beat: Maybe being a cook or a "chef" is a profession you ought to inspect. Did you know there are schools where you can get a degree that gives you a head start on cooking professionally?

Drugs Equals The Hall

The worst place drugs have ever took me to is Juvenile Hall. I was drunk one day and I went out late. Then I was so tired. I was at my friend house. Then it got late and every one was going home when some kids at the house went to steal a car then I walked off. Then I was walking and the police took me here. Now I'm in the worst place I ever been.

-Thien

From The Beat: It sounds like you were in the wrong place at the wrong time, like so many others who have landed where you sit now. We hope that at the very least you can take this time to learn an important lesson, and to think about how much less likely it is that this would have happened if you hadn't been hanging out, getting drunk with folks who steal cars.

Guilty

My mom thinks I'm guilty because she don't like me. And I think she wrong, but my grandma wants me to come home and take care of her and my nephews and nieces so remember you don't want your mom or anybody to think your guilty.

-Meli

From The Beat: Your mom is wrong to not like you. Mom's can be really mad and fed up with their children, but not liking them is a terrible thing. We hope that you are just in a bad place for your relationship and things will get better over time.

Your Peers

Your peers can lead you to trouble, or a night of great fun. They can be your best friends, or they can be your worst friend. They can help you, or they can harm you. Peers can lead you to danger or safety. In time of need, they can comfort you, or they can leave you hangin'.

-A peer

From The Beat: Sounds like you're realizing both sides to 'your peers.' With that said what will you do with this realization? Everything in life has it's ups and downs. But are the downs that your peers bring worth the momentary ups? Are you currently in there due to your peers? Sometimes it's not what you know, it's what you do with what you know. Know what I mean!?

How It Is

Even in jail there is still no independence people tell me when to eat, when to wake up when, to take a shower, when to come out or go in my room. Maybe if they let me out of this place I can have a little more independence I should be getting out tomorrow but I'll believe it when I see myself on the other side of this gate because a piece of paper always don't tell the truth.

-Waiting For A Release

From The Beat: We don't think that jail was ever meant to be seen as a place where you gain independence—in fact we think it's a place that was designed to rob you of any feelings of independence. Do you think that system works? Does it make you want to stay on the outs and never come back?

Stress On My Face

What it do this Lil' Young. I'm still in here thirty-five days so far, waitin' for a release. What's up wit' it whoever know me Lil Young. I'm still take every thang go dumb you feel me. I'm lightweight stressin' in this unit. They be tryna play me up in here. I'm tired of wakin up every morning in this same ole hell hole. I been stressin' up in here for so long you can see it on my face at times. Everybody keep it solid never turf pop and hang like snotty nose, peace out.

-Lil Young

From The Beat: We bet your face shows your frustration, and we hope you know that it's better to be honest about how juvie really makes you feel than to keep it inside. So what will you do the next time you wake up on the outs? The same stuff, or are you going to try to redirect yourself?

Independence

To me independence means that when you're finally out there on your own, you know how to take care of yourself. There is also lots of responsibilities when you be independent. I'm thinking that I wouldn't be ready pay rent and bills because I am too used to getting taken care of. I think I might just live off of females. I might just get a job and have my main female pay rent.

-Lil' K

From The Beat: WHOA there! You are young and nieve. What makes you think you can find a woman to pay your rent and take care of you? Who's going to take care of her? Ideally, we think the best relationships are the ones that are based on an exchange of support, not just one person doing all the work. Instead of looking for someone to take on all of your responsibilities, we think you ought to start thinking about taking responsibility for yourself and working for the things you need.

Last Night In The Hall

Well I wanna say this is my last stop here because I'm released tomorrow and never coming back. I'm keeping my word. When I get released I ain't looking back.

All I got to say is everybody in the hall keep ya' head up. I'm out.

-Kb

From The Beat: A lot of people say they're never coming back. What will you do to make what you said true? We want to believe and have faith in you but you must have a solid plan. Not planning is planning to fail. And that's not what we want for any of you.

Believin'

This I believe I go back home to see my family and friends because I miss them and I'm homesick and I miss my bed, bathroom and my street and miss one person, she's my girl.

-D

From The Beat: We hope you're reunited really soon.

Hear Me

Can you hear my tears?

What about my prayers?

Listen to me cry out for forgiveness.

Lord help me change, give me strength

Give me will power for another day

-G-Suggas

From The Beat: If you keep praying for it, it will come. But don't be afraid to ask others for help. God works in mysterious ways. Sometimes it's helpful to have someone hear you on the mortal plane.

I Can Be A Mechanic

I believe that someday I can be a mechanic and work on everybody's car. Fix things that go wrong with the engine. I also believe that I can fix car body parts.

-Call Me Auto

From The Beat: That's good that you believe that. Have you had any experience doing this type of work/hobby? You know that they have classes that can help you learn what you need to know in order to get into this field. If you believe you can do it, then do it. We believe you can do it also.

Came To The Hall For Weed

I came to the hall for getting high off weed, but it's cool. I don't care because I will be back in the hood and get back on my feet.

-Stewie

From The Beat: If you don't care then you more than likely will end up back in the halls. Except maybe next time it'll be more than a minute. How do those who sincerely care about you feel about this? They probably don't think it's cool.

The Worst Place

The worst place drugs have ever taken me is to be really high. When I was really high off weed I kept on walking around with my friends. The bad thing was that I was really sleepy and tired from smoking. So everywhere that we had gone to I felt like sleeping but I didn't want to sleep so it made me feel not good because I had to keep on walking because I didn't want to sleep in the street.

-Andy

From The Beat: Sounds like you were really bored—maybe you need to find something that will stimulate your mind, like a book or school.

Independence

When I am eighteen, I will finally be on my own, free from my dad, free from everything. I will finally be able to buy cigarettes. I look forward to getting married to my love, Paul. I am from Union City.

-Sassy

From The Beat: Why is it important to be free from your dad? Is it because he's too strict? Or is it because he's mean? Uncaring? What are the reasons. It may help you to examine them. As far as being old enough to by cigarettes, that is perhaps the greatest disservice the age of 18 can provide you.

I Didn't Feel Like Walking

The worst place drugs takin' me was on a high speed chase. 'Cause I didn't feel like walkin' home. So I stole a car. Road around smokin' hella blunts and slappin' 'The Carter Three. 'Bout to go hit up the hotel room and mac on some females. Then Taz (police) got on me so I had to push on them.

-Lil' Dame

From The Beat: That was a bad case indeed. We appreciate you sharing but you speak of it and make it sound like it was fun. Is it fun that it led you in juvenile hall? What if you would have gotten into an accident? We know that wouldn't have been fun? We hope you've learned something from this. And please believe that it could have been and could get worse.

Sick Of Jail

Damn I hate jail!

I wish I could talk my way out of this hell

I hope I change my evil ways

I pray that luck comes my way

I'm ready to grow, quit playing this role

Get out the game, make my own way.

-G-Suggas

From The Beat: People can talk themselves out of a lot of situations, but you can't talk yourself out of your own head, your own skin. If you're going to make the change you want to make, talking yourself out of jail won't be necessary, it will be a natural result of making the right decisions.

It's Ugly

Wassup Beat. Yep, ya' boy Lil' Glen back in these fake halls. Well it's lookin' real ugly. I'm goin' to ROP for 18 months. Won't be seeing my real ninjas for at least nine months.

To my loved ones, keep it solid. Well until next time, I'm about to go lay my gangster down.

-Lil' Glen

From The Beat: It's a shame that you think of yourselves as animals. Because most animals are usually caged up, or locked up. Surely your life is worth more than being locked up. Is locked up better than being free? Only you have the real answer to this one.

Drugs Is Good

I believe drugs is good for you because it brings me to a better place. A place where nothing bad can happen. When I'm high I feel like a little kid.

-Vietnamese

From The Beat: A lot of bad has happened because of drugs. Do you think that maybe half of the reported murders in your town are drug related? Or had something to do relating to drugs? If so how much is that number? Isn't that bad? How about the driver that hits and kills someone who's under the influence of alcohol and drugs? Drugs may take your mind off your problem for a minute. But when the high wears off the problem is still there. You're entitled to your opinion but we hope you see where we're coming from.

I Believe...

I believe I can be what I want to be. I want to be a mechanic. I believe I can stop drinking alcohol and do good. But some people say they can do something and they really can't. Because they used that drug or did what they did for too long.

I believe I will feel very good when I get out and see my mom, sisters, girlfriend, and friends.

-T-Face

From The Beat: If you believe you can do it then all that's left is to do it. You will feel good to get out and see loved ones. You will also feel good when you accomplish something you want to do. And this will build your confidence to make new, bigger goals that will help you in life. It's up to you what you do with your time.

This Addiction

Rip Cell

Everybody is addicted to money, drugs, and squad shhh. The ninjas in my squad get a lot of money, smoke a lot of weed and bang our squad to the fullest.

Free my folks.

To all my squad.

But it all ends one day.

Just hope me and my brahs safe and solid.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: It will end one day. Where will you be when it ends? Will you be behind bars, six feet under, or will you be free of drama? Everybody is addicted to something but not everybody is getting locked up because of their additions.

I Believe I Can Fly

I believe I can fly

I believe I can touch the sky

I think about it every night and day

I spread my wings and fly away

I believe can I soar

You see me running through that open door

I believe I can fly.

-Lil' Dizzy

From The Beat: Thank you for the R. Kelly excerpt. What does this song mean to you? Does it motivate you to want to do something? Does it remind you of something or someone? What were you doing when this song first came out? Can you share more about the song or the words?

At First Sight

I believe in love at first sight it's just like a bike you move when you see a bike you go nuts just like when you see a girl it is just like pearl diamond.

-Kango

From The Beat: But do you fall in love with a bike the way you fall in love with a person? Is it the same kind of love—like you just want to own it?

Drugs Are Good And Bad

I believe drugs are good and bad. They are good because it makes you feel good. They are also bad because it ruins your life. It's gonna make you keep spending your money on it.

-Jordan

From The Beat: We can go on and on about the good and bad of drugs - mostly bad. You however say that it'll ruin your life. Hopefully knowing that is enough to keep you away from drugs. This may limit your problems in the future. Of course it depends on what else you're doing.

I Believe...

I believe the system is some shhh to wash kids and make them get time they don't deserve.

Like me, I'm getting' 6-9 months in a group home and all I did was violate E-M once. They never gave me a second chance. The judge just tryin' to give me time I shouldn't get. Man I should be released by now, but instead I'm waiting to go to Trinity, Sacramento. I ain't even gonna get to see my gamilly for hella long. So this is some bull.

I think the judge need to have some compassion on me and let me go home. The judge is too hard on us, like we some adults not kids. So I'm just gonna forget the system and do it my way. If they can't help me, I won't help them.

-Kendall

From The Beat: There are other ways that they can help you. Maybe you don't deserve to go, we don't know and can't be the judge of that. You do however deserve to give yourself a chance! You can't play games with the system when obviously they ain't playing games with you. We feel for all of you, but you must understand that you put yourself in that predicament. And if you feel as frustrated as you do now, then you don't deserve to put yourself back in that predicament. You're helping them more by coming in and out of the system. Our words of advice to you when in Trinity. Do not run!

Back To Camp

I would like to tell all in camp what's up. It's me! How all you all doing up there? I wanted to say what's up. I will see you campers in about several weeks because the judge is going to send me back to camp. I'm not going to be the only one at camp. I'm going to be the only OG at camp. I wish all of y'all to do good when all of y'all get out. I will be in there all by myself. And I will see everybody come in and out.

-Lil' Chucky

From The Beat: Hopefully this is your last time having to go back to camp. Surely seeing everyone come in and out has taught you a lesson or two.

Back In The Hall

What's up with it Beat. This yo' boy Lil' Laron comin' at y'all from this unit. Yeah they finally caught yo' boy, but it's good though. Because all they got me fo' is that weak ass warrant. Fo' running from Boys Republic. I had to do it movin' because that group home wasn't the spirit.

But anyways, I'm back so y'all already know what time it is. Its time fo' a ninja to knock this lil' hall time out. So I can bounce back and be back in the hood.

So I'm a end it like this. Free all my ninjas that's in the hall. I could go on fo' a long time, so make a long story short, RIP to all the rest of my folks that's gone but not forgotten.

-Lil' Laron

From The Beat: We hope you knock your time out and maybe get a new perspective on life. Bouncing back can be done and hopefully you don't put yourself in a predicament where you can't bounce back. Be smart and returning to the hood is not too smart. So, we bet we'll see you soon enough Lil' Laron!

I Believe...

I believe that I could hit two-hundred hundred push ups in twenty-minutes. I believe that I could stop robbing so I don't end up in here again.

-Oba

From The Beat: We believe you can do whatever you set your mind on doing. It's up to you to carry out those thoughts/words into action. Will you do something to support those beliefs? Because believing it and doing something about it are two different things.

Independent

I'm very independent with myself because if I wasn't, I wouldn't be in here for something I didn't do. But if I could stand up all by myself, I wouldn't be in here right now.

If I could write this letter to the judge, I know that he could let me out. If I could stand out, I could let all of my actions out there.

-Lil' Chucky

From The Beat: Being independent does mean standing and doing things on your own, for yourself. But there is also more to being independent. Why haven't you written that letter to the judge? What exactly do you mean with your last sentence?

This The Boy

What's good wit' The Beat. This the boy off that boat, fresh off the island, back in the hall for a violation for not doing my weekends. So now I gotta do them in the hall. Six weekends straight in the hall. But it's cool though, be out in a week, its nothing.

-Island Boy Beam

From The Beat: It may be nothing now, but if you were to keep doing nothing what would the judge think? Are you missing out on some things, family, that you could have been involved with were you out? Doing nothing when you're suppose to be doing something for your probation, more times than not will bring you back into the halls. You may not be missing out on much right now, but how about the next time?

Where I'm From

Yeah where I'm from ninjas get smoked. All me and my ninjas do is get money and get high.

-Lil' Laron

From The Beat: As you can tell we edit your piece. It's good to be proud of where you're from but it seems like you're proud of it for all the wrong reasons, this is nt a godo sign for that son who is on the way. Of course, people get smoked, get money, get high and/or get wet in other neighborhoods too. Do you think that's all there is to life? Is this the life you would want for your unborn child? The world is bigger than you think. And we believe you're smarter than you think. Use your time wisely, please. If not, you are screwing the life of an innocent child and that is a crime!

They Cuttin' My Dreads!

What's good wit' it, Beat? Dis yo' boy Dell wit' some horrible news — I got to tell you I'm going to R.O.P., but that ain't the bad part, this is: They making me cut them dreads thangs today! I'm a miss them! We had a lot of fun years! But you know how that goes. But yeah, I'm a miss you: R.I.P. my dreads!

-Dell

From The Beat: It took a lot of courage to do what you were about to do the day you wrote this. We can still see you there waiting for the barber for the entire hour of our workshop, and still waiting when we walked out the door. Dreads have a certain look and feel that when you've had it for years, it feels like it's just you! On the real. But you'll soon see that there's way more to you than what others see.

Dedicated To All My Folks

What's up Beat. Once again this Lil' Laron. I was just thinking about all my potnas that's locked up in this halls. From Intake to The Max Unit. So if you from where I'm from you know what I mean.

-Lil' Laron

From The Beat: We don't know what you mean and maybe you don't know what you really mean. What's so good about having a lot of associates in the halls? It sounds like you spend a lot more time in the halls and placement than you do on the streets? Is that really living life? Being told what to do and when to do it? Not being in control. Is this how you wanna live the rest of your life, wit ha child who gets no love from his daddy. What a tragedy in the making!

Let Me Go Free

set me free, set me free
from all the pain and misery
the stress, the lies
everyday askin' why
if i wasn't here
i'd be so high
passin' time
not a worry in the sky
doin' what i need to do to get by
why all my ninja' die
don't know
maybe it was they' time

-Jacka

From The Beat: It wasn't their time, it was living a life of crime that put their lives on the line. And as you get older, the game gets bolder, and the smart ones get out before they get shot down or locked up for years on end, seeing all their friends either dyin' or locked up inside the system. What you need to do is find a legal way to get by, 'cause the life style of a YG is more like a death style, don't you see? And the OG's tell lies to make themselves look good instead of spreading truth in the 'hood.

Drugs Took Me to Jail

The worst place drugs ever took me was jail. I was off two pills and three blunts and a fifth of Hen' — and I came to jail for fightin' the police.

I don't regret this decision that I made when I made it, because it was in the past and I can't change it. But I can learn a lesson from it and change what I do in the future.

-Baby Larry

From The Beat: If you really do learn your lesson and let it change the decisions you make in the future, then you've transformed a potential regret into a blessing — by learning a lesson.

That Girl

I be looking in the eyes of this one fine girl that blow my mine then I go crazy because I want her to be my lady then I go wild then bring her to the town an show her how I get down it be so fast like tac. Then do my thing and let hang down low to the flow if you don't.

-Kango

From The Beat: Hmm...sounds like you really go crazy for this girl... Our words of advice, be respectful to her, yourself, your family and be safe!

How Will 2007 Be Different 2006?

What I'm going to do different? I will try to make it through 2007 because you never know what can happen. I will try to do better in school. Make my mom happy and try to make it through a new year. Because this year I lost a lot of friends.

So I just want 2007 to go good. I know I'm going to lose more friends. I wish that won't happen. I can't lose no more friends. I wish that my family would like me to change. I scared to not see my mom again. Because at anytime I can die and I don't want that to happen. So I will try to do the best I can to stay out of trouble in 2007.

-Lil' Sammy

From The Beat: Only you have the power to make things different in the New Year. We're sure that your family wants the best for you and would welcome a change from you. Take advantage of the time that you have today. Like you said, there's no telling what may happen tomorrow.

How Far Have Drugs Taken Me?

When I did drugs my life got messed up and I got lost. I lost half of my family. And so when I stopped, I found my family.

-Lil' Dizzy

From The Beat: That sounds like a valuable lesson to have learned from that experience. Hopefully you never have to go back and lose your loved ones and self again.

Don't Ask No Questions

don't ask me why i bang what i bang
'cause we a family, we ain't no gang
they saw we all about getting rich
you might get took out if you try to snitch
but i'm real, i know i'm not gon' shine forever
so one day, i'm gonna have to try to get it together
but until that day you know what i say
i ain't ready to change, so i don't even pray
so all i can do is hope to live another day
so i just gon' stay solid and stand tall
'cause i'm loved by few and respected by all

-Lil' Eli

From The Beat: There is only ever one day to change: today. And every day you delay both increases the price you'll have to pay and the danger that you won't be around to see the next day anyway. We know there's a lot of love shared on the block, but when you've been around long enough you'll learn that it's not something you can count on when you get caught by the law — no letters from your homies on the outs, just rumors and doubts about who said what about what they say they saw so they don't have to get caught up like you by the law. Show yourself some proper respect and get out the game before all you have left are regrets.

I Pray It Comes True

This I believe and pray it comes true. The thing I believe and pray that it come' true — is that my brother gets out and beats his case.

And I'm prayin' if it doesn't happen like that, that at least he will get a shorter sentence and be able to come home with the family. And I wanted to say Happy Thanksgiving, as I write this, and Happy Holidays as you read it, to my older brother, Mike Jonez.

-Lil' Vee

From The Beat: It is very cool to be praying for the well-being of another. So while you're praying, don't just pray that he goes free but that he makes the sort of decisions once he gets out that will keep him free — 'cause we can't tell you how many catch a break and then throw it away in a matter of months, weeks or even days after their release. So along with praying that he goes free, pray that he makes better decisions so he can stay free.

Jail Is Where Drugs Took Me

Drugs — man, let me tell you — jail is where they took me! I mean, damn, it ain't the worst place to be, at times, but it's the most common. A lot of times, to tell you the truth, it's the most fortunate of situations, 'cause it's a lot of people resting behind a situation concerning drugs.

Then again, drugs has took some on life-threatening trips, concerning debts — when they're temporarily taken and rode around, scared, not knowing what's gon' happen but assuming the worst 'cause they know what the situation is. Cold — but some real life shhh!

-Kid

From The Beat: Phew! You do tell some cold truth here. You don't say it, but it's the nature of drug abuse to take you as low as you can go, and getting locked up can stop the down escalator before you hit the basement described in your second paragraph. Another thing you don't say is how both ends of that car ride is bad news, 'cause drunk and high on power (and maybe rage around so-called respect and reputation) the ones doing the punishing make decisions they can never take back. Then, one day they're in here writing about how they're in too deep, for a fact — and it didn't have to be like that.

Drugs, Jails and Hospitals

Well, drugs have never taken me to a bad place except for here. And like when me and my ninja, Scarface, was at the sideshow, and he got shot twelve times, and he almost died 'cause I crashed when I was takin' him to the hospital.

-Lil' Vee

From The Beat: So, did you crash driving him to the hospital partially because you were high? Did drugs play a part in his getting shot? Maybe the shooters were high. Maybe you wouldn't have been so high-profile if you weren't so high? Well, this story deserves to be told in full, so we can understand what all got pulled. We guessing you got arrested and brought here, right?

Interview With Freddy

[B = The Beat Within; F = Freddy]
 B- How long you been locked up?
 F- One month and a few weeks.
 B- When do you expect to get released?
 F- Sometime this week.
 B- Where you going?
 F- To a group home.
 B- Where?
 F- Away from the town, far away.
 B- What will you miss most away from Oakland?
 F- My mom, little sis', big sis', girlfriend, my real ninjas, and all the fun and excitement.
 B- What do you do for fun?
 F- Post up with my cousins and sis'.
 B- What did you do to get in here?
 F- Got caught with a pistol.
 B- Bullet in the chamber?
 F- Yes. It was a revolver.
 B- 'Cause too many youngstas getting killed and I ain't tryin' to be one.
 B- Do you feel that a gun protects you?
 F- Yes, in some ways it does.
 B- Do they have to know you have one?
 F- No, not really, but if they try to jump me they gonna find out.
 B- What are you going to do when you get out?
 F- Finish high school, stay away from the mix, and get a job. Take care of my mom and little sister!

-Freddy

From The Beat: Too bad we ran out of time. So we suggest, you do your best to focus on school and finding a part-time legit job for you, so you can bring home steady pay if not a lot, till you get your degree and a better job than the one you've got. You'll be out with your family a lot, and your mom and lil' sister will be proud of what they got in you, someone with the maturity to keep coming through 'cause he found the maturity to do right with his life.

Don't Believe

I really don't believe in love at first sight. I do believe that you can fall in love with looking in a girl's eyes. I got my first wifey because when we was having intercourse I was staring at her eyes and it was kind of like a special feeling. I thought it was love.

-Lil' KJ

From The Beat: You thought it was, but it wasn't? So maybe looks, and first impressions, can be deceiving? As for the intercourse, we hope you both were having safe sex!

R.I.P Ron-B

"Not Ron-B!" is what I said when they murdered him. Now Leon is locked up — and I'm locked up, too! Ain't nobody feeling it!

I'm still bargin' though 'cause when I get out, we still holdin' it down! I got locked up, but outside it's still okay for our side. And I'm getting out soon! To all of a ninjas out there who lost somebody, it's okay — just keep yo' head up and everything goin' to be all right. And for Leon who got years in the Y — keep yo' head up.

-Lil' Tae

From The Beat: We're all for you and yours keeping your heads up, but truth to tell, you've got your head buried in the sand and what you seeing is just a dream. Ron B is dead, that's as real as it gets. And Leon is locked away for years, that's no dream. But planning to go on living the same way that got one of them killed and the other locked away — no, that's not okay. Wake up! If you really care about your life and the lives of those in your crew, recognize that it's time to change the things that you do. While you're in here, focus on school, and if the send you to Camp, enroll in programs and volunteer for work, too. It is possible to change your fate before it's too late, and be a role model for the others Lil' Tae.

Trash Talk Needs to Stop

Man, this Lil' Man comin' out of max unit. Anyway, let me tell you how the system be. It's these staff that be talkin' trash.

They be tellin' you to run up on them so they can push charges on you! But all they gon' do is push that scan and spray that can! So fake.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: It's fine to appeal to them to change their behavior, but the only behavior you surely have the power to change is your own. So whatever they say or do, just do your best to keep your cool. Treat it like a test, and prove you're the best.

The Soap Opera Continues

On some real talk! I'm sick of being locked up wit' hella fake-ass ninjas! Ninjas be comin' in here actin' like they solid, but they be straight marks.

That goes for system poeple, too, but some staff be cool — and they know who they are. These other system folk want to come in here and act more immature than we do. They'll talk hella trash like they got this or they got that, but when the unit gets some new stuff — they be the first ones takin our stuff home with them! I be seein' this and I'm thinking to myself, "You talk all this stuff, but you broke as hell!"

Or also ninjas you think is solid, be snitchin' or talking hella trash — but can't fight! I wish these ninjas would man up and do they time and quit doing that mark-ash bull! If you ain't in my circle, I ain't messin' wit' you, straight up!

-Young Weezy

From The Beat: Maximum security juvenile detention is no place to be. Of course you find it all frustrating and hard to take, 'cause almost everyone locked up at this level has had lots of chances to make changes but stayed bull-headed making the same mistakes over and over. You can cling to your circle if you choose, but they didn't stop you from getting caught for breaking the rules. If you're looking for your comfort zone, the only thing you have power over is the grey matter in your dome. So teach yourself to take the best and leave the rest, 'cause in this place you have to work hard to feel blessed. Take the focus off of everybody else and put it back on yourself.

2007

It will be different for me because I will be 18 and not in here with these people. I will be home with my ninjas, with my family and girlfriend.

-Big Stewie

From The Beat: The only thing that sounds different is that you'll be eighteen. As you can tell we cut a little bit of your piece. Being 18 and considered and adult means that the consequences will be greater. Are you aware and prepared for this? We hope that the new year will be truly different for you.

This Is Not A Game!

Man, I'm tired of all these stupid females getting on my nerves. How can you be ugly with an ugly attitude? These females nowadays need some guidance. Just because they be on the track, they think they know it all!

Man, they need to get put in their place, on the real! Because if I was out, I would have been [I would already have] slapped a hooker!

Man, respect my mind or get your brain redefined. This is not a game! So if you can't keep up, sit yourself down.

-Aleisha

From The Beat: We can't help but notice that every week you are very, very angry with someone, staff or detainee, over something they did or said. It just seems like you're hurting yourself the most with all this anger. At some point, you will have to take responsibility for giving someone else the power to "get on your nerves" — 'cause you have no power over their mouths, but you do have some power (more or less depending on yourself) over how much or little you'll let their foolishness, rudeness, or whatever you want to call it, upset you! We don't know what else we can do to help other than suggest that you try methods of reducing the power their behavior has over your state of mind.

I Believe

that i can stay out of trouble
 and do the right thing
 i'm getting out soon
 so that's all that matters

-Lil' Tae

From The Beat: It's hard to see it, but all that matters is what and how you do after you get out — 'cause staying out is what it's really all about.

One Day

One day my friend tried to stop me from fighting, but it didn't happen because I was too mad. He tried to pull me away from him but he couldn't because I had to beat him up because he was talking too much stuff. I was fighting the person for about five minutes then finally my friend pulled me off him.

-Montaje

From The Beat: Do you wish your friend had succeeded in intervening? In the end did you feel like it was worth the fight? Sometimes it's hard to think rationally in the heat of an angry violent moment, but it's so important to control our impulses, especially violent ones.

My Love

"If I wrote you a symphony just to see how much you mean to me what would you do?"

If I told you were beautiful would you date me on the regular? Tell me, would you now baby?

I been around the world and ain't seen myself with another girl like you, this symbol represent my heart because I seen us holding hands walking on the beach with our toes on sand because all I want you to be is my love, my love. Now if I wrote a love note and made you sing every word I wrote what would it make you want to change seen and be on the one my team would you because all I want is for you to be my love."

-Javier

From The Beat: A team—that's the right idea. We hope your love is reading because you say some pretty nice things here.

Mo' Hater, Mo' Prayer

people wish a ninja like me die
 but that just make me want to do better
 mo' hater just come with life sometimes
 i got to just let that garbage go
 in one ear and out the other
 keep on trying to hear them
 just make me hella mad
 so i got to pray
 because i can be crazy at some times

-Choyce

From The Beat: Prayer can help, but you know that already — that's why you pray when you get to feeling crazy unsteady. Yesterday it was "mo' love or no love" but today it's "fo' sho' love" 'cause you've learned it only takes you deeper into a negative fate when you dish out just deserts for hate — and the consequences you face make your victory a waste. Prayer can help you rise above the hater's reach, and when he's ready to learn he'll see you were always ready to teach.

Tired of Rudeness

I'm tired of how some of these people talk to me, like they are rude sometimes! They need to knock that stuff off, fast! You might be hard when you on the outs wit' that pipe in ya mouth but not in here! So quit while you're ahead!

-Tired

From The Beat: For sure being locked in here with troubled peers will wear on you, but it's all on you to learn to handle your feelings and frustrations in the face of tribulations. When you can do that, you're more than halfway to repairing you so that when you get out, you'll stay out too!

When...

When I look at my baby girl's eyes I feel so good because she make me happy and she make me feel very good. Sometimes I feel sad when I look to her I'm very happy because I love her and I miss her so much that I cry in my sleep.

-D

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a good reason to stay out of the halls... you have someone you care about on the outs, someone who probably misses you too when you're locked up. Sometimes it's worth it to think about the ones we care about when we're trying to make difficult changes in our lifestyles.

Bra

What it do bra. I'm in this unit doing cool, thinking, missing everybody. I might be going home soon. I might be going home soon and it don't matter because I'm about to be 18. You feel me. Don't let nobody mess with you. One love.

-Big Stewie

From The Beat: We wish you well when you get out. But do believe that if you hang with the same people and do the same stuff, you will end up in the same type of places. Is that all you want for yourself?

Got a Write-Up

yesterday i got a write up and it's going to mess up my home visit and i been thinking about that all day now i don't know if i'm going home or not but this is my first home visit and i don't want to mess it up i really want to see my mom and my family

-Make Money

From The Beat: We betting that if you can chill on the stressing that they'll let you go home — and even if it's twelve hours instead of overnight, it will all be as good as you make it. By the time you read this, you can tell us if we were right or wrong.

Love At First Sight

I believe in love at first sight. I don't believe in being in love at first sight. To me loving somebody can be different from being in love. Like right now I love this female, but I'm not in love with her. How can you be in love with somebody you don't even know? That's part of being in love. You have to know them, mind, body and soul. So to the topic, I love at sight but not in love.

-P-Stank

From The Beat: We all differences of opinion on this topic and we appreciate you sharing yours.

I Could've Been...

I could have prevented myself from getting caught. I could've hopped out the car an' hit the fence. And been at home right now chillin', smoking some grapes and sippin' some. Then I could've been on the block with all my cousins and friends. If I would've hopped out the car I wouldn't be in this predicament right now. I could've been at one of my girls houses right now, having some fun. Doing what I want to do right now.

-Oba

From The Beat: Those are definitely all the things that you're missing out on. But what did you do in order to be in this predicament? Instead of what you could've done, "hit the fence." Why would you have had to hit a fence in the first place? Try and think about that part as well.

Calls From Jail

There's this one girl that I seen at my friend's party, and when I seen her, I came to believe in love at first sight!

The next day, she called me, and I asked her, "How did you get my number?" And she said that she asked my friend. That day when she called me, the first thing she said was, "Do you believe in love at first sight?" And I said, "Yes, I do."

And I asked her if she believed in it. She said, "Yes." Then I was stuck for a long minute, not knowing what to say. Then she came to [To be continued.]

-Junior

From The Beat: What a charming beginning to a love story! We can't wait to hear more, and we get the feeling there's a happy ending to all this, too. Well, except for the part where you get yourself locked up in the Hall and now Camp, for some bad decisions you made that now have you separated from your 'love at first sight'.

Another One Bites The Dust

day in, day out, somebody get bust'
another one down, they fell in the dust
the dust is the turf, killin' all my brah's
i already know what this life does
to get out the 'hood is a must
'cause i'm not about to be another cat in the dust
that's why i love life with no love and trust
i stand alone, ain't no "we" or "us"
i'm by myself, a one-man army
jesus christ the only man i let guard me
anyone else is a enemy in my mind

-Lil' Eli

From The Beat: Jesus said, "Be cunning as a serpent and innocent as a dove," which means don't be your enemy's fool but also do no harm. And both those things in mind, think about what he meant by "Love your enemy as yourself." It can't mean invite your enemy to rob you or harm you, but it does seem to mean do nothing to him you would not want done to you. Soon it should be clear to you that if you don't want to be another one to bite the dust, getting out the scandalous street game is a must. Find a legal way to make pay, and keep off the spot all night and day.

Do What I Do Best

To tell you the truth, I don't know what I do best, see, because I do a lot of things good, like for example, I'm good at drawing and doing tattoos every now and then. I'm good at sports, like football and baseball and lightweight soccer.

I can talk my way out of anything and everything sometimes. But for right now, I'm just chillin', like always, see, because I'm a leader not a follower. I do my thing. That's probably the one thing I do best! Sometimes I think I can do better than what I'm doing now. Well, anyways, it's your crazy uncle Fairlas saying — peace, and live your life, nobody else's.

-Fairlas

From The Beat: Maybe you should go into sales, and we don't mean drug sales, with your ability to talk to people and, frankly, manipulate them. Moreover, if you are actually selling a good and useful product, you won't even have to feel bad about it when they put money in your pocket. Or then again, maybe you want to start work in a tattoo parlor. Or both. Meanwhile, you need to finish your secondary education, get a degree and move yourself off the streets! Then maybe doing good will be what you do best.

Light Brown Color Eyes

When I look into your eyes I see a light brown color. That makes me want to do some things to you. Things that we can do in the public, and things that we are supposed to do behind doors. But your eyes make me want to do those things in the public. I enjoy looking into eyes that make me feel younger again. Like Don King need a perm, I need you.

-Tone-Tone

From The Beat: Are you able to see those eyes while you're locked up? Your memory is good and we hope you remember what happened that took you away from looking into those eyes.

Love? Hell No!

Do you believe in love at first sight? No because you can't really tell how the person is when you first meet them. Some people believe in it but I don't because I think you have to get to know someone to love them. Just as love can help you it can destroy you. But I can't talk for everyone I don't believe in it because I have had my heart broken so that's my opinion.

-Broken Hearted Man

From The Beat: We agree—there's definitely an attraction that can happen at the first moment two people meet, but to really love someone it's probably necessary to get to know them first.

Player Played Himself

i fell in love with someone
and my heart had got crushed on
and my feelings was hurt
being in love with someone
and then catching him
with another female, it will hurt me
because it always hurt the female
but you know what
i am not gon' to fight no female
over no ninja because
if he don't want no real female like me
well he had one in me and lost one
which is me, so i stay to myself

-Eesee

From The Beat: Yeah, when he played around on you, he played himself for a fool 'cause he didn't know what he lost when he lost you. And bravo for not fighting the next female over a ninja whose heart and mind both failed to feel the value he had in you.

RIP

RIP I miss you bra. I still go hard for you. Nothing has changed. I miss you. Keep an eye on me.

-Stewie

From The Beat: Those you love and care for will always watch out for you. But are you willing to watch out for yourself? Are you willing to do things that won't put you in that type of predicament?

Still Lookin' Militant

Man what'su p Beat. This ya boy Lil' Glen still up in these played out halls. Man as you know it's still lookin' militant for ya boy up in here. PO just came in here today talkin' 'bout some ROP or CYA. Man that stuff had me hot boy. But I ain't trippin' 'cause everybody know wherever I go, I'm go keep it so-so solid feel me?

To my loved ones at camp, y'all know who y'all is. Y'all keep it solid up there

If you hyfee, you might as well stop bangin' and that's real.

-Lil' Glen

From The Beat: Are you hot because of the consequences you're facing, or because of the predicament you put yourself in? Is it better to be solid on the inside, or to be free and in the outside world? You sound like you have more sense than you give yourself credit for.

Time Almost Over

up at camp
got a month or so left
up here go by quick
so don't run
if you gonna come up here

-Vietnamese D

From The Beat: Why everybody got to bang his race? It doesn't show pride but just brings you back to this place, if you're lucky, 'cause Camp, like you say, is an easy ride to freedom. So quit bangin' before you're lost to the system, or missin' — caught by a bullet's sizzlin'.

Doing My Best

2007 is going to go good for me because I am going to stay out of the halls. Be with my family more and friends.

I will be turning 16 in September. I am going to get a job and go to school at the same time. I will be a brother and a son to my family.

I can be good to myself in 2007. I will do my best.

-Justin

From The Beat: Doing your best will more than likely accomplish what you want. Those are all good things you mentioned and we hope you carry out those thoughts. You can do it if you give it your all. We have faith in you.

Juvenile Hall Ain't It.

Juvenile Hall ain't it. The reason I say that is because some of these youngsters be complaining like they got hella time to do. This lil' hall time ain't nothing compared to the pen. I can see if you in a max, because over there they might be looking at some real time. But to you ninjas in these units complaining, stop comin' to the hall because this ain't it.

To all that's in max, keep yo' head up and knock that time out. To you that's always complaining, just stop comin' to the hall. If you can't handle this, imagine the pen.

RIP to all my ninjas that's gone. Especially my bra.

-Laron

From The Beat: You're right that a lot of people do complain. Did you ever complain about being in the halls? It's easy to say not to come back, but a person must change what he's done in order to get there in the first place. We hope that you've learned from this experience because now you have responsibilities that need to be taken care of. You know what you need to do. It's probably the exact opposite of what you've done all the other times you got out, and came back in.

Love At First Sight

I believe in love at first sight because it happened to me. This feeling happened at school.

She was super sexy, chocolate, and her body was bangin'.

First thought came to mind was how creamy the pearl was. Givin' the name of my dream girl would let everyone know who she is, and that's too much info.

But now that we talk, it makes me feel much better than not sayin' nothing to her.

Since we both on the same level and share the same feelings about each other, I think it should work out between us two.

She in a group home and I'm in the hall.

So when I get out I wish the best of luck f or us both and our relationship together.

But if it's just a crush so what you think about us?

-Beam

From The Beat: Sounds like only she can answer that. If things work out they were meant to be. We hope you both get that real opportunity to talk and get each others feelings across.

Serenity

Strength for me to carry on.
Even though I just want to run.
So very far away from here.

Where everything is so pure and clean.

Where nobody can keep me from telling you that you're the one.
I want to spend my whole life with you.

I never wanted to call it quits.

When small is big and short is tall, that's the day our love will fall.

But I'm away and your not here,
you seem so far away and I miss you more and more each day.

-Ney

From The Beat: Never say never. Just remember you have a long life ahead of you. It doesn't mean that what you're feeling now isn't real, of course it is. But remember that some choices have longer lasting results than committing yourself to a boy at age 15 - like education for example.

Bored As Hell ...

What's up Beat! This is Tony from Fremont. I'm up here at Camp Sweeney, bored as hell. I've been locked up for four months already, with about three-and-a-half more months to go! I can't wait to get out of here and kick it with all my homies on the block.

Postin' up, and nothin' to worry about like I do when I'm on a home pass! The worst part of that is — you on a home pass, and when the whole weekend is over and you got to go back to a facility for the whole week until the next weekend, and then do it all over again.

But Christmas is comin' up, and I'll be at home for about the whole week! And I'm gonna get out on a straight release! To all locked up: Keep yo' head up and get out of here. And I'm out.

-Tony

From The Beat: Until you learn how to worry enough about your choices to change them, we'll just have to worry for you, huh? Don't you see that if you don't change what you do on the outs, it's just a matter of time and circumstance (as they say, "wrong time, wrong place") before you return to incarceration, praying for another shot at this very same Camp you're moaning and groaning about right now — 'cause as so many have written in our pages: this place is Disneyland compared to what the system has waiting for you down the line. So use that straight release to get off the block posted up with the homies — get your high school degree, a decent j-o-b, and stay free. This is your best opportunity! But you're not thinking that ambitiously, just waiting to kick back with drank and weed.

I Care For Her

I do believe in love at first sight, yes. I am going to tell you why? It's a girl I like but I'm scared to show it because how will she think. Friends will tell me things, so I act like I don't care for her. But I do, I just can't show her. She may think it's dumb. But I see she do care for me. I'm going to tell her that the first time I met her, she was sexy to me. I just did not want to tell her because I was thinking it was stupid. But I want her to know that I care for her.

-Lil' Sammy

From The Beat: Sounds like a lot can be resolved if you just tell her. We hope you're able to do so and that things work out for you two.

2007

is gonna be different
from 2006

because i'm'a make a different
choice in my life

i'm gonna make the right decision
not to go to juvenile hall

this 2007 is like
starting yo' life fresh

without any problems

-Anewme

From The Beat: Very cool indeed, but if you don't want to put your name — will you be able to stand against all the pressure to go back to the same old street game with all its excitement and pain?

Help Us, Don't Make It Worse

This I believe: Some staff is cool with us and cool to talk to — and some ain't. But I ain't go' say no names.

But it's cool that we have some cool staff here, 'cause they know what we going through. Many of them went through the same thing we went through.

And the staff that be going bad, they just don't know. Please, God, lead them through to help us, not to make it worse!

-Young Ricky

From The Beat: Thank you Ricky for these frank and honest words. We know that by the time you read our words, you'll be at the Y. We urge you to get involved in programs, finish your education and get some practical job training. We know you're probably tired of hearing the word "potential" — but if you could harness you intelligence and personality to a legal pursuit, you'd never have to hit the grind to find your loot. After your release, you could stay free! Drop us a line while you're at the Y.

2007 I'm Gonna Change

2007 will be different from 2006.

In 2006 I wasn't doing good.

2007 I'm gonna make a difference.

2006 I was doing some hot stuff.

Now I'm in jail for all that stuff, karma.

2007 I'm gonna change.

Stop doing stuff that ain't suppose to happen.

-Jordan

From The Beat: You can make a difference if you choose to do so. You're not the only one affected by your actions. Think about your family, loved ones and friends? Don't forget about the victims also. Sometimes it just ain't worth it. Best of luck in 2007!

Locked Up

What's up with it Beat. This Lil' Laron. Man a ninja tired of getting' locked up.

I got a family to take care of and I'm in here. How the hell I'ma be able to take care of mines and I'm in here? I can't do what I'm suppose to do because I'm locked up. I can't make no dough because I'm locked up. What I need to do is knock this lil' time out so I can be back.

-Laron

From The Beat: What will you do when you get back? Will you continue to do the same things that will have you saying, "I'm tired of getting locked up," again? How you go about taking care of yours will determine whether you come back or not. These however are choices that only you can make.

In Your Eyes

I was looking into the eyes of essence
I became entertained; it was love.

I had loved her presence

I became mesmerized and then I realized
it was just a look but both of our love is what it took

I stole her card and became a crook
but both of our love is what it took and she was shook.

-Lil' Cheech

From The Beat: This is a very lyrical piece. Are you a poet? You should think about line breaks and how they might make the reading of your piece different. We do hope the feelings were mutual!?

Tired of Fighting

I've been experienced in fighting my whole life.

I grew up in Atlanta,

but since the age of four I moved out to California, and I have lived in Oakland for seven years now.

I've joined a gang ever since they told me I must get their back. Whenever it happens, they call me

out for back up

— I been so tired!

-Nario

From The Beat: It's hard to say no when they come at you like that, but in the end the price is too high to keep saying yes. Maybe you're ready for a change.

I'm Gone

Dear Beat and readers, this is Derrick. This is gonna be my last time writing to you all. I mean thanks for helping me do my time, I liked the topics they were very good. I believe the readers and writers can be true to they self. The next time you hear from me I will be working for The Beat. The people locked up here can work toward being successful. Peace Out.

-Derrick

From The Beat: We look forward to seeing you in our office! Thank you too for taking your writing and your life seriously. Best to you in the coming year!

A New Love

What it do Beat? This is Derrick. I found a new love. She is sweet and kind, thick and fine. When I get out we gonna wine and dine. Getting free and being with her is on my mind. To all, look you gonna get to be with that special girl on the outs. Stay safe I'm gone.

-Derrick

From The Beat: It's great that you have something to look forward to when you get out!

Friends Ain't Cool

Friends ain't cool 'cause when you ain't around and the enemy's around they just talk about you and that ain't cool. They're supposed to be solid to the end but you can see who your friend's are and who is not. But Lil' T don't have no friends. I got goons that's ready but who ever is reading this: find a solid friend. Just get money or whatever y'all do and just eat 'cause friends would cross you. I'm out Beat.

-Baby T

From The Beat: There's so much betrayal on the streets. Friends betray each other because they're insecure, everyone's in danger. Maybe we could all be better friends to each other if the stakes weren't so high. Have you ever betrayed a friend? What do you look for in a friend?

Money, Money, Money

I believe that money makes the world go round. Because if people didn't have money imagine how hard life would be today. Just look and see how hard it is for bums and dope fiends to survive nowadays. To me besides my family and friends money is the most important thing in life. How do you think you'll look if you didn't get money, how do you think your clothes and shoes would look? So everybody when you get out, get money if you can the legal way or any way you can. But be safe because too many of us is getting killed.

-Lil' Mike

From The Beat: Ok, money is important, we see that. And money isn't always easy to get the legit way, we know that. But the price you pay for getting it any way you can is much higher than the cost of shoes and a scraper. We don't want your name added to the list of RIPs or doing years incarcerated, so what's your plan for avoiding the money trap?

In 2007

in two thousand and seven
i won't be in heaven
i'll probably be chillin' in seven/eleven
looking for a cheetos or chilli fritos
riding my bike, wearing speedos
i'll want to date and probably skate
take her out and then fake
leave her stranded to pay the bill
at least she fed me, that's how i'll feel
but i'm not a playa, i just cherish a lot
so in two thousand and seven
i won't be on the spot

-Andre

From The Beat: If you keep running out on the one you love, you'll be the one left paying the bill mentioned above — not the food bill but the fool bill, running till you run out of luck. Why not get a j-o-b, so you don't have to depend on anyone else for groceries. Staying off the spot will help a lot, but how you gonna do that without a job? Play women for all they got? Man, that gets old and your reputation gets hot. Then one day you wake up, and you're all you've got. So yourself more respect and get a job.

I Go Stupid

Boy, I go stupid! I bump that thang! Lil' Ant (that's me), he charge that thang! Pop the clutch, go stupid in the vanny — throw deuces on the quad with the L-R frames!

I go stupid 'cause the turf is back. Y'all ain't got to drop nothin' on these purple sacks. Oh, yup, that's a fact. But when I hear that thang clap, I don't want to feel it burn my back!

-Anthony

From The Beat: Here you are under lock and key, talking 'bout how crazy you can be out in the street. Hmm, you don't have to be a rocket scientist to see the connection to see what direction your life is heading — jails, hospitals and death receive those too sick with street disease to give "go stupid" a rest! Slow down and get blessed. (And the other piece you wrote this week, intended to disrespect the next writer in The Beat, really disrespects yourself — why you think you can talk about any young lady like she's something less? 'Cause it's you with whom she chose to mess? That's why we say, you're disrespecting yourself.)

Hope and Pray

I believe when I go to court on Friday I'm going to get some good news, 'cause I really need it. Hopefully they keep me as a juvenile. I wish they do. Hopefully God give me this blessing to stay as a Juvenile, but until then all I can do is hope and pray. But I believe that I am getting out soon and that my girl love me, and I believe that she believe I'm getting sooner or later. Yo' Boy

-Lil Rome

From The Beat: Good luck with your case. By the time this piece runs you will probably know whether you were charged as a Juvenile or an adult. If it helps we hope the best for you as well. Peace.

"I Believe"

I believe in myself, because a lot of people talk about nonsense to my ears and try to put me down on what I'm living through. What I'm doing is real and faithfully true! Being mad at me and the world is not what I do. Even sometimes when people get me mad, I use self-control to keep me cool, not to let them get to me. And in me I tell myself to not give up, that's why I believe myself!

-SaeFeezy

From The Beat: It's wonderful that you believe in yourself, and you can say it. So many people lack that strength. Please share your strength with everyone around you. What is your release plan from juvenile hall?

To All

What's up, Beat? This is Lil Ant. I wanted to say what's up to those up at Camp. Keep you heads up and do y'all programs so we can hit the streets once again.

To all that never made it, Rest in Paradise. And to my lil' homie Arturo Romero (RIP), we miss you and love you, homeboy! Can't wait to see you in gangsta heaven! I love you always, never to be forgotten. Well, Beat, that's all I got to say. And I'm out!

-Lil' Ant

From The Beat: It should be obvious that you need a better plan than just to hit the streets once again — and that's plain bad advice to your friends unless you actually want to see them locked up again, or dead! Man, you all need to slow your roll to so-called "gangsta heaven". Really, he's up there at the side of God, purified of all mistakes and misdeeds, looking down on you and praying you do not return to the streets and die young. He's no longer blinded by the sun but standing in it, shining down on you with the power of truth — neither life in the pin' nor dead in the street is what he wants for you; live a normal life of freedom with family — love, is what he wants to see you do.

Baby On The Way

I believe when I get out I can change my life around. I got a baby on the way and I'm tryin' to change my life around. My babymama is four months and she can't live without me. I need to get out and do the right thing.

-Hoochie

From The Beat: Fatherhood, a tiny soul that thinks you're the greatest thing in the world. It's amazing, you about to become someone's daddy, someone's superhero. So tell us, what does doing the right thing mean to you? What will you need to do to make things work, for you and your girl and your new family?

Dough! 2007

two thousand and seven
i'm all 'bout dough
new year so
i need new dollars
i'm stackin these dollars
even though i already do stack
i got to stack these chips
if i want to get rich
you need money
to i'm gonna get dough man

-Dough Man

From The Beat: Maybe it's like the old story about the tortoise and the hare (rabbit). You start out fast, chasing all the money that's there in the street. But how much money do you make when you're locked up with shackles on your feet? That's when the slow tortoise, who works for his high school degree is headed for a better j-o-b that puts money in his pocket and keeps him free at the same time. He maybe takes a few college classes, too, to improve his skills. In time he has a better job with better pay, while you're trying not to get killed in the street or you're sitting in your cell praying for a better day when they set you free.

I Believe

I believe that my black people are struggling to find a great job and houses. The white man is making it even harder for us. We should be able to have the same jobs as the others.

-Rill

From The Beat: Nearly fifty years after the civil rights movement, racism still affects all of us every day. The system and society in a whole is still unfair. What other ways do you see racism around you?

Tired

i'm tired of this trash
i hate this stupid-ass camp
i'm tired of staff tellin' me what to do
i'm tired of these fake-ass folks
thinkin' they're somebody
when they really ain't nothin'
all this gives me a headache
i hate wakin' up in the mornin'
i'm too tired —
i hate the school
i ain't learnin' nothin'
the teachers are weak
they aren't real
basically i'm just tired
of being here — period
i'm tired of writin'
i'm out, late

-Soldier

From The Beat: It's natural to get tired of this place, especially with all these fools getting up in your face, for sure it's enough to give you a headache. But now you're too smart not to learn in school. Tell your teacher you want an extra assignment or project to do, and make him/her teach you beyond the busy work in the classroom. 'Cause like most everything in life, learning is on you, a'ight?

Dreams Warn Me

I think dreams try to warn me 'bout important things, because I have dreams that I don't really understand but then weeks or months later something really similar to my dream happened.

For example I had a dream that I was w/ my ex boyfriend in a bunk bed and the bed would get bigger and there was a friend of his there with us. We were talking and all of a sudden my mom came in and tried to pull my hair. After that I was in a dark alley by myself with someone but I don't remember the rest. Later on, after a week past I got caught talkin' to him by mom and got in trouble then I realized that everythin' that happened in my dream meant something.

For example the bed getting higher probably was the symbol that my ex was high at the time and his friend being there was the symbol that hella of his friends were there. The dark alley probably was the symbol of that at that time it was dark but yeah that's why I think that dreams can really mean something and you should really pay attention to your dreams because everything that happens in a dream is probably symbols of what can happen later on.

-Jasmin

From The Beat: You know, it's saddens us to know that you aren't proud of your writing because you are such a good writer. In workshops you're quiet and generally keep to yourself, which isn't a bad thing, but we feel like you have a lot of great things to say and we'd love to hear them. What can we do to bring out the leader in you? You have great potential and we want to bring that out in you.

Dreams

What are dreams but a fragment of the imagination

A picture you see when you go to sleep.

No dreams are apart of your very existence.

The fact of dreams are a part of who we are.

Dreams are an image that explains something to you

Either when you awake or asleep.

They tell you what is or what is to become.

They are based on what u think about.

They decide what happens next and if you are in danger.

What are dreams...

Are they here for our protection or do they harm us.

What do you dream...

Are you frightened, scared, is it magical, does it give you

nightmares. Does it trap you in your own imagination.

My dreams tell me who I am, what I am and who I will become

What does your dreams say about you?

-Angel

From The Beat: You are an amazing poet and we think you should do some slam poetry. Have you ever seen the movie 'Slam'? Well, if not, we think you should as every young poet should see that movie. You string words together so elegantly that we had to keep ourselves with the subject you were speaking about because we kind of got lost in your skills. How long have you been writing poetry? Would you want to be a paid poet?

Are We Still Slaves

Who in the world really believes we are truly free. If you ask me I feel that we are still slaves because in the world to day we make a enough money just to be broke. We are slaves to our bills, to our classification, and if your life me you know there are three class we all fit in. but I'm going to start from the top. First you have the rich or the (high class), then we have working class the (middle class), and finally you have the working poor the (lower class).

The reason I feel this way of the middle class and of the working poor don't do anything to change it. We have become comfortable with what we have and have a fear to lose. But I stand here and even if I'm the first one to say NO!!! I'm not a slave, well at least not anymore.

So come with me and take my have and listen so you can be free through out the land.

-Emmanuel

From The Beat: You are a very deep thinker and we really appreciate having you in our workshops because you are a natural born leader. Do you really think that everyone who's poor doesn't want to change that? What would you say to a poor person who's been struggling to get money all of his life? What are they doing wrong and how can they change it?

My Dreams: A Fat Man

I had a dream that I was in my house then all of a sudden I was at sku. Den dis phat boy approached me and tried to eat me then I got scared and woke up.

-Erika On Mines

From The Beat: What do you think this dream symbolized? Maybe the fact that society tells us fat ain't cool, but do you know some fat people who you're cool with. What would they say if they read this piece?

My Poem (What is Lubb)

What is lubb?

Is lubb a word that a person

Uses to express their feelings to that person

Or is it a word that a person make up to make

That person feel good inside? Is lubb an exclamatory word?

Or is it a word that a person uses to get that person to open

their legs to that person.

Or do they say they lubb them to get that person to do anything for them is that what lubb is?

-Erika On Mines

From The Beat: Have you ever heard the saying, "Boys give love for sex, and girls give sex for love." Well, we think that's kind of what you're saying in this poem. Have you ever loved someone? If so, was it because you wanted something in particular from them? Or was it because you really loved them?

What Is Love?

What is love, does it come for free?

Where can you find it in a tree, the dean?

Why do people say they love each other

And then leave each other.

Some times I think what it is but I can never find out.

I see people being together for 2 or 3 months

But don't stay with each other.

Every day I ask people and they can't explain.

I look at my parents then I know what love is.

-Daniel

From The Beat: Yeah, love can be very confusing because more times than not, people use the word love for different reasons. Most of the time it's to get something they want, but sometimes it really is genuine like the love you see your parents sharing. What about their relationship lets you know there's still love there? Do you want what they have with someone special? Well, you still have a lot of time to find the right one, so please don't rush into anything.

Peacemaker

If the world was a stage I'd be the "Peacemaker." I would be a peacemaker because I think that since Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech didn't get to the worlds heads I can try and continue his place in history. I believe that if my continuation of his words can bring back the "peace" he was trying to bring. If my words don't get understood I will have to take action and try to end the world because if life is all about war, I don't think there should be life.

-Dominic

From The Beat: Well, that's what wars do, right? Take the lives of others. It's very inspiring to know that someone as young as you still wants to make a change in the world. Sometimes it takes a whole lifetime for people to realize we even need a change, let alone, want to do something to provide that change. You are wise beyond your years and for that we're grateful.

If my words don't get understood I will have to take action and try to end the world because if life is all about war, I don't think there should be life.

SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY

Learned My Lesson

Year 2007 will be different from 2006 because I have learned my lesson in YGC. I got locked up because I was in a fight near my school, and got arrested the next day in school. I fought because I was defending my friend from getting jumped. It was worth it when I was fighting, but it's not worth it after I got locked up for one month now.

-Brian B2

From The Beat: Well at least you can say that you learned something of value this year, even though you had to learn it the hard way. Now all you have to do is apply this valuable lesson in your life. That way, you won't repeat the same mistakes or back step — right back to the halls or worse.

Kinda Want To Change, Kinda Don't

When I get out, I kinda do wanna change, but I kinda don't, at the same time. The reason is: I don't like being shot at, but I like all the attention that I do get, but not by the boys.

-Hot Boy B1

From The Beat: One really big problem with not changing, Hot Boy, is that not liking to be shot is no protection from being shot! And being shot is one of those things that, once it happens, is too late to undo. Now's the time to change, even though you wish you didn't have to. Think about it.

When I Look Into Your Eyes...

When I look into you eyes I see beautiful

I see someone smart

I see somethin' that I can cherish

But when I look into my own eyes I don't know what

I see sometimes

I see evil in my eyes

But I also see someone that can change

-Daddy-O B2

From The Beat: Who is the beautiful and smart person whose eyes you're looking into? Can that person help you to become the person you want to be? We don't see evil in your eyes, but we do see confusion and pain, and those things often get interpreted as evil. Change is guaranteed. It's only the quality of that change that is not known. And it's only your future actions that will make it known!

What I Miss Most

I miss being on my block. I miss riding with my homies. I miss life on the streets, going to school, being with my lady. I miss going out, chillin' with my lil' brah. I miss my fam and my homies who kept in touch wit' me while I'm locked up. I should've listened to my loved ones telling me to quit being a hot boy, but what can I say? Spit happens.

-Little Rascal B1

From the Beat: Sounds like you're not too serious about change — which, to us, means you're not too serious about staying out of this place. We can tell you miss being out, so don't you think that staying out requires some changes, maybe giving up some of the things that lead you here?

Beef

It's ninjas packin' heat
In this world made of meat
In this war called the beef
So stay out the street
And listen for the beat!

-The Anti B1

From the Beat: It is a "crime" that children have to grow up on the streets you describe in this tight little poem. Is there a way you can stay off these mean streets? There is a better world out there.

This I Believe

I believe that some of these group homes are weak as hell 'cause they don't care for you, they just there to get paid off of you. Also, sometimes the judge'll let you out on D-Dap, and some people don't know that a set up for you to keep comin' back. So, think before you take that deal they give you.

-Twon B1

From The Beat: The time to think, Twon, is before you are faced with having to decide to take a deal or not. So we want you to take your own advice, as long as you apply it before you commit the act that brings you here or to one of those weak group homes.

This Is What I Believe

I believe in my family
Because they trust me
And they love and care for me
That's why I'ma stop selling that ecstasy
My family help me with everything
That's why I'ma stop doing bad things
And start being home on time
So I won't do any crime

-Miky B1

From the Beat: Sounds like you are going to start making the right choices. You had better start getting it together now, because if you wait until you get out you won't be prepared for the responsibilities of freedom.

I Believe

I believe I'm going home and I never come back. believe I can do everything on my own. And I believe in myself. Because if you don't believe what you doing everything is not right.

-Lovelylotobaby GU

From The Beat: Believing in yourself is great, and believing that you can do everything yourself is good too, but remember this, we all need some help and support from our loved ones or friends once in a while. Even strangers can help us when we're in need. We are only human, which means we can not just do everything ourselves without a helping hand.

Lost In The System

I'm lost in the system and I say this because they in court, talkin' all these numbers and I don't understand them. All these 707s, 603s and 409s, and nobody know what that means, unless you a lawyer, judge or a DA. My PO recommended for me to go to the Ranch. I mean, I can do time there, but, really, do I wanna go? So my lawyer said to have a contested hearing, but I don't know if that's goin' make a difference on whether or not I'll be sent to the Ranch. So, yeah, somebody hook me up wit' some knowledge and tell me what might happen. One love, Beat.

-Young Ant B1

From the Beat: You're not necessarily lost, you just don't understand what they are talking about in court. If you can get your hands on a penal code you can study your case yourself. We don't know which hearing your lawyer wants to contest (fight), but we can tell you that a 707 hearing is to see if they want to try you as an adult or a juvenile. But the most important thing is this: your lawyer works for you, and you have a right and a responsibility to ask him or her anything about your case. If there is something you don't understand, keep asking until you get an answer!

This I Believe

I believe that everyone deserves another chance. 'Cause then, when people, like the ones that actually killed someone, they might have changed. They give them another chance to go back to the streets, 'cause they don't release them and give them another chance. So I believe everyone deserves a chance, like everyone locked up in here and elsewhere.

-Ramon B1

From the Beat: Everyone does deserve another chance, and when you get out, that will be your other chance. What do you plan to do with it when it comes to you?

Depending On Yourself

Independence means being you, having responsibility, being able to control a situation to be strong and protect yourself, and stand up for what you believe in without any help on your own. Sometimes bad things come up and you have responsibility to take care of things, so you have to step up the bat and do it even if you don't want to do it, with no help from anyone. That's independence.

There is a lot of good things that come with independence, like everything you have is yours, you don't have to depend on anybody for anything, you can live your life knowing you don't have to depend on anything or anybody.

-King B4

From The Beat: Yes, there are a lot of good things that come with independence. But it's not exactly accurate to say that "you don't have to depend on anybody for anything." The reality is that you have to depend on yourself for everything, and that one of the scary things that comes with independence.

Missing Thanksgiving

I have missed two Thanksgivings since I have been locked up. On Thanksgiving, I usually go to my dad's house. We go to Chinatown to buy groceries. Then after that, we buy cooked turkey at this Chinese restaurant in San Bruno.

I love eating turkey. I'm really going to miss that moment being with my family. I miss them a lot because they showed me a lot of support even though I don't deserve it. Well, happy Thanksgiving to everybody, especially The Beat Within.

-Weapon

From The Beat: Being locked away from those you love during this time of year must be especially difficult, and we're sorry you are experiencing this separation. At the same time, though, you are learning about who is truly worthy of your love and respect, and the debt you owe them. You say you don't deserve the support you're getting, but that's the very heart of unconditional love. It's there whether you "deserve" it or not. From what you've been writing these past weeks, we think you deserve all the love and support and warmth you can get. Thank you for your happy Thanksgiving wishes to The Beat. Next year — for sure — you will be enjoying a family Thanksgiving, and you will have much to be thankful for!

School Is The Key

For success I'll try to go to school more and try to do the right thing for myself. I will try to do the right thing for myself, like doing good at school, and try to get good grades.

Sometimes I think I should listen to my mom to do the right thing, but I didn't, so I will try to listen to my mom and do the right thing.

-Thomas B1

From the Beat: All those "try to" words make us concerned that you are not going to take control of your life and do what you know you must if you want to stay out of here. Your plan is a great one to follow — not just "try" to follow. Start to put it to use now so when you get out you will be ready.

I Hate YGC

I'm getting sick and tired of YGC
I wanna leave
I hate YGC
I hate the cops that arrested me

-Steven B1

From the Beat: Steven, it seems like you are mad at them for catching you when you really should be mad at yourself for doing whatever it was that gave those cops the power to take away your freedom! When you are really sick and tired of YGC, you'll figure out that coming here or not coming here is in your hands.

I'm Not No Dog

This The Beat
B-Wizz need to be on the streets
They got me locked up in a small-ass room
They do us dirty, man
I'm not no dog
I gots to be out
Me and my homies been gone for too long
I believe we all should have a chance
I'm out

-B-Wizz B1

From The Beat: Didn't you and the homies locked up with you put yourselves in here? Each of you knows what you did to hand away your freedom, so each of you knows what you have to stop doing in order to keep your freedom when you get out. Unfortunately, just knowing what to do is not enough. You also have to do it!

Born To Live, Live To Die

Yeah, it's your boy, Pancho, comin' from YGC, not sayin' it's good where I'm writing to you from. So my topic is "Born To Live, Live To Die."

I was born to live and I'm living today. We was born to live our life to the fullest, but sometimes I sit and think, "Why am I trying so hard to do good, but all I'm going to do is leave and it's going to be gone — all I worked for gone." That should make everybody think.

I know I'm going to heaven, because when I get out, I not coming back like the other times. Peace...

-Pancho B1

From the Beat: Didn't you tell yourself that you wouldn't come back those other times? Why is this time going to be different? What's your plan for change?

You Cannot Blame The Drug

The worst place drugs ever taken me is... drugs have never taken me anywhere. I was the one that used the drug, so you cannot blame the drug. But the worst place I have ever been was that I broke into a store at the Trans Bay Terminal store.

-Frogy B1

From The Beat: Of course you're right, you took the drugs, but then the drugs you took also took you somewhere in your mind — a place that let you think you could break into a store without consequences. Do you ever worry about what those drugs might be doing to your developing body and brain?

Missing My Grandpa

I believe the way people die is wrong
 If I had a voice of an angel I would sing them a song
 The love you had for this person can never be taken away
 I know how you feeling because I too live this way
 I lost my great grandfather a few weeks ago
 He lost his life do to old age and I am thankful for that
 If I could take back every minute I missed with him
 I would be thankful for that
 People often say if they can change the hands of time
 If I could for one last time I would tell my grandpa how much I loved him
 And how much he meant to me
 And I would make him understand that he was really the "MAN" and not me
 So I say until we meet again, I love my grandpa with every inch of my heart
 And until then I'ma always think smart.

-Rell B4

From The Beat: This is a wonderful tribute to your grandfather. We can tell how much you loved him, and we're sure he loved you. If he could sit with you for a few minutes more, what advice do you think he would be giving you? What would he hope you do? Can you do it?

Can't Wait To Get Out The Fish Bowl

Since I have been locked up I have learned a lot about fishes from my Russian roommate. I can't wait till I get out so I could check out his aquarium. He got more then thirty tanks in his house. So I can't wait to just knock out my time at the ranch.

-Puffer B4

From The Beat: You're lucky to have a roommate who can talk about things other than the block, the 'hood, or the homies. It's nice to see both of you so interested in things outside yourselves. Who takes care of all his fish while he's here? Are you going to start your own collection?

Drugs Led Me To Do Stupid Shhh

The worst place drugs have ever taken me was doing stupid shhh that got me in this place in the first place, but nobody's perfect. Everybody makes mistakes even if it is serious. Some of these ninjas just plain stupid is hell, got a brain but don't use it. It ain't like you can't use it, it's just you don't wanna use it and that's just sad.

It's just our generation is all confused. Ninjas need to start using they brain and start makin' positive decisions. I ain't tryna preach to you ninjas 'cause you ninjas go do what ch'all do anyway, but just stay safe...

-Al-Bundy B5

From The Beat: Were drugs involved in the "serious mistake" you made to get yourself locked up this time? If so, maybe you should find another way to amuse yourself. We're not sure you are really using your brain (either), Al. When you write about "keep the block lit" (we took it out), we wonder if you've thought long and hard about the even more serious consequences that wait down the line if you were to follow that advice...

I'ma Smoke 'Til I Choke

The worst place drugs took me was to jail for smokin' weed. I didn't want to stop smokin' weed because it helps me stay focused on the things I like to do. I like to smoke so much I just could not stop.

-Dubb B5

From The Beat: Of course you can stop if you choose to. If you "can't" stop, then you're truly addicted, and that's something you don't want to be. Are you locked up because of weed? If that's true, that would be enough for us to quit. But we don't think weed is why you're in B5. If you're not going to stop smoking weed, what are you going to stop doing?

The One I Think Of

I see her but I ask does she see me. This girl is beautiful like the stars, not only on the outside but on the inside too. I notice every little thing, her voice, legs, eyes and hands. I sniff and smell all the time just to find her scent. Then when I think, I ask myself is this true love, but my heart in bleeding and my mind is blank 'cause can you or not love the one you think of?

-Macky-O B4

From The Beat: Well, we don't know if you can "love" someone from looks alone, but we don't think so because you really don't know about her character, what kind of person she is. When you sniff for her scent, what does she smell like?

Mind Thinkin' 'Bout Life

I'm in YGC doin' this time. They got me stuck in this cell doing this mind thinkin'. I'm thinkin' hard when I'm going to get out and turn my life around. I got a week and two days left to sit up straight and face the judge and be a man. I got a baby mama at home that's waitin' for me to return, and grandma right there havin' my back, saying, "Grandson, don't give up. You be home soon."

I pray every night and the days go by 'cause I'll be home as soon as possible. It's strength that's keeping me strong and standing so don't give up. Mom, I miss you to death and nothing can change that. Without you by my side my life and joy is through my butterscotch baby mama.

-Lil' MMO B4

From The Beat: Your grandma is right, you will be home and able to rejoin your family. But you know as well as they know that the real trick is being able to stay at home and not fall again to the temptations of the streets that give the system its power to take you away from them! Do you have a plan for when you get home that will be different from how it has been?

Independence

Independence means to me that you make your own money you get yo' own stuff. Like me, I'm independent. I get my own stuff I make my own money the legit way. You feel me.

-Yung B B5

From The Beat: We're glad you added "the legit way" in how you make your money, because there are a lot of youngsters who BELIEVE they are independent because they have money to spend. But if they jack someone for their money, or sell drugs to get it, they are very, very DEPENDENT on others. At the moment, you are dependent on the staff here to feed you, house you, clothe you, medicate you, etc. You must be looking forward to real independence again.

Drunk In The Park

The worst place that drugs have ever taken me was one day about nine months ago, I was in Diablo Park in Daly City. It was... I say about 10:00 p.m., as dark as the depths of hell. I was hanging out with one of my friends. We were just drinking a few beers, smoking cigarettes.

Then he called some friends. One hour later they came. They were Samoan ninjas. They had a lot of E&J brandy. We all started drinking. I don't like these ninjas, but I didn't say nothing since they were my friend's friends.

-Marc

From The Beat: Why was this the "worst place" drugs ever took you? You haven't written anything that's remotely bad in this experience — except that when you're getting drunk at your age (and we're sure this is just one time of many), then we think you have problem you should face and deal with. If you don't think so, we're afraid the worst place that drugs will take you still lies ahead...

This What Bundy Believe

I believe that everybody that comes to juvenile hall should be givin' a chance to do right even if they is in here with a serious crime. Me personally would hire some judges and DAs from off the street because they would know where we comin' from and how the streets and block really is. It ain't all our fault the reason why we commit crimes. It's the family and neighborhood that we live in.

If you livin' in a screwed up block with killin' every day and hear shots goin' off, that's how you go get raised. We go stay shinin', but ninjas don't wanna see you shine. Ninjas know where I be 24/7 ya' heard, but everybody go believe different things, 'cause nobody the same. But some people will believe the same thing such as the judge givin' us another chance to prove them wrong. If you know me — which everybody does — I'ma keep doin' me until it's my time to leave this world. Beat, I gotta shake the spot, so I'll see y'all next week same time, same place, I'm out.

-Al-Bundy B5

From The Beat: Why should people know where you are 24/7? Wouldn't you like to do some things that are just for you, that nobody knows about but you? Who is more important, Al, you as an individual or the larger "group" you rep (however you want to define that group)? If it's you ("I'ma keep doin' me") then what is the "you" you're doing? Are you doing you right now, right here in this lock-up? If not, then you should think very carefully about what "doing you" means — and whether it's worth risking you to do you.

Disappointing Grandma

The worst place drugs have taken me was in the house when my grandmother was visiting me to say hi. When she looked into my eyes, I could tell that she knew that I just got done smokin' weed. It made me feel upset to know she had found out that way.

-Young Meel B5

From The Beat: We're not sure whether your grandmother knew you had just smoked or not, but we are sure that you saw your own guilt reflected in her eyes. That means you were doing something that your own conscience knew you shouldn't be doing. Next time, we hope you follow what you know to be right — and what you know would not disappoint your grandmother!

Drugs Destroy Families

I want to tell you about a family member. When she was like 18, she had a kid, but she started doing drugs. She started doing crack. She started messing up and when she went to the hospital to give birth they tested her and she tested dirty. So they took her baby. Less than a year later she had another, but she was still on crack and they took her away too. My mom was fighting to get them back but she only succeeded to get one! Her other one was killed in the foster home! She still doing crack to this day.

-Nacho B5

From The Beat: This is such a sad story, Nacho. Crack wipes out all sense of responsibility. It not only destroys the life of those who take it, but it ruins the generations that follow them! We have seen crack heads do things to get their drug that would make them die of shame if they were in their right minds. We hope this puts you off crack forever, and makes you think about the dangers that all drugs pose for those who take them!

Instant Gratification

Some people don't take the time to really think about what they do or how they do it. They just want what they want and they get it. No matter how bad or how good, they just do it whether it's drugs, money, sex, food, whatever. They may be happy, they may be sad but they all know what they do.

-Footz GU

From The Beat: So are you one of those people, or do you take the time to think things through?

Independence

What's up with the Beat Within? It's ya' boy G Baby. Being independent is being yourself. Me, I'm independent. I think for myself. I don't follow behind people. I don't just do things just be like everyone else.

I'm a leader. I don't do things just to fit in and for people to like me. I'm so independent sometimes I just sit by myself and think about my situation and think about change. I stay to myself. I really don't tell people my feelings because it's hard for me to trust. Sometimes when I'm in my room alone thinking, I cry, not because I'm a punk, scared, and soft. It's because some things I just got to let out. I just let it build up and the tears is all my emotions I'm letting out.

And being independent is surviving on your own doing what you got to do when it need to be done. Handling your responsibilities.

-CF Baby B2

From The Beat: As a leader, you must have led yourself to this juvenile hall! Which means, as a leader, you can lead yourself out and keep yourself out. That would be the true test of your leadership. Far from being a "punk, scared and soft" for crying, we think that writing openly about it shows you are strong, courageous and honest. Now, put those wonderful character traits to work for you by doing what you know you have to do — and not doing what you know you should not do.

I Believe Real Shhh

I am Lando from the jungle, ya feel me. I believe if you thuggin' you thuggin'. You can't be fake and real. So I believe you gotta stay real. These streets is hectic so you gotta stay on your toes. Ninjas snitching and shhh.

I got a few ninjas locked up right now in Marin City. They holdin' it down. I live a rough life. It just my mom, my sister, and my boys. I ain't got no dad, ya' feel me.

I be always on the run "wildin'," saying, "To hell with the halls." But know I am starting to think like I should finish school then do what it do. But, I don't believe in snitches.

-Lando B2

From The Beat: You can say "To hell with the halls," but you're the one living in hell, not the people operating the halls. So it sounds to us like your attitude doesn't hurt them at all but hurts you a whole lot! How smart is that? We hope you just keep thinking about school, and why finishing it is the key to a future that does not include being a slave to this system. Think about it, then act!

Baby Pelican Bay

I believe that they shouldn't have built the new building aka Baby Pelican Bay. I think that this building will break a lot of us, but I think I'm strong enough to deal with it. But I'm not ready to go because I'm not even used to YGC yet.

The new jail is way worse from what I'm hearing from the staff. It's now November 21, 2006, and I go to court on December 1, 2006. The white people are trying to take me away from my family. I don't want to be away from them because I lost my mom and favorite uncle a month apart.

So I'm tryin' t' keep my head up and get out of here so I can be with my family.

-G-Boa B2

From The Beat: Who knows it as Baby Pelican Bay? We have not heard that one before. (By the way, this is a far cry from Pelican Bay, and we hope you never think that you know what that experience is based on this experience. YGC — even the new one — is a playpen compared to what goes on at PB.) You have suffered some terrible personal losses this past year, so we hope that you get to be with your family, too. But if that doesn't happen right away, just keep that goal in front of you so that you will do what you need to do to make it happen.

Independence

I been on my own since I was twelve years of age, doing everything I wanted to do. Making money by stealing, selling drugs, selling other people body. I did anything to make some money "fast" and I didn't care how I got it.

I wish I still have my parents to tell me what to do, when to come in the house, when to wake up and go to sleep, but I rush too fast to get what I wanted and now I am by myself paying my own rent/car note and working. I wish I still was in my family home doing what they told me to do.

-Naye GU

From The Beat: Did you choose to be "independent" at such an early age, or was this a result of some event? Have you seen the connection between that "fast" money and the fast track to juvenile hall (and worse)? The only money you're making right now (slow or fast) is going straight into the system's pockets. The legit way may be slower in the short run, but it pays off in the long run.

Still holding it down

Chea, wha's good wit' tha Beat? Me, I'm still holdin' it down in the halls. I been in here two months and three weeks tryin' to fight the Ranch. I finally beat it and now I'm going to a grouper. I'm 'bout to go knock dis shhh out so I could go home, feel me.

-Darius B2

From The Beat: We're curious to know why you prefer a group home to the Ranch. What's so bad about the Ranch?

The Worst Place

The worst place drugs have taken me is to having fun, but for some reason when I drink I get all crazy and wanna fight everybody and they grandmas. But I recently just start smokin' when two of my friends passed away. Never had a crazy story.

-Kamay GU

From The Beat: Drugs might seem to be an easy way to escape your problems or sad feelings, but it's only a temporary relief. What we hope you focus on, though, is drinking. Our experience is that alcohol is as bad and destructive as any drug out there, and so easy to get that you can easily fool yourself into thinking it's no big deal. But it is a big deal, and unless you get control of it now, it will control more and more of your life until it becomes a life-long problem to deal with. A word to the wise...

Time To Shine

Man, I been in here for hell a long

For some bullshhh

Doing hard time

Because I did the crime

Ninjas be getting out in no time

I don't see how

Are they telling on people?

I don't know

But I'm not

So I got

To do my time

Don't rat

Because you will get played hard

So just do yo' time

Then come back to the streets

And shine

-B-Ray B1

From The Beat: When you go back to the streets to "shine"/ What do you have in mind?/ If you "shine" in the same way you did before/You'll face the same consequences, only more/Unless you change your ways on those streets/You'll be writing a lot more in The Beat/So if you can't stand the YGC stink/It's time to stop the bullshhh, don't you think?

Three Topics In One

I believe that everything that happens is for a reason to teach you something or show you something, and hopefully you will learn of your mistakes.

I am not ready to be independent. It's a hard world out there. You have to be ready to work, pay bills, and I'm not.

The first time I smoked weed was at school. I felt sad so I did it. But after I got high, I was like damn, what the hell did I do 'cause I didn't know what was going on. All I cared was me and me. But now you realize that you need your family no matter what. So I know now that when I get out of here it's going to be a whole 'nother thing for me. I'm going to try all my best on not bein' on the street doing dirty shhhh.

-RoRo GU

From The Beat: If everything happens for a reason, what is the reason that you have lost your freedom, and what changes will it bring to your future? One future change we want from you, RoRo, is to write only on ONE topic, not all three. Just choose the subject that appeals the most to you, and write a lot about it. If you choose all the topics (as you did here), it doesn't let you say much about any of them. Thanks.

Drugs

Drugs never put me in a situation where I don't have nowhere to go, but doing drugs actually changed me. I'm not no major drugs user, but I used the drug that I use a lot. I used to smoke hella weed. Believe it or not I started smoking weed at 11 years old, and I'm 16 now.

I used to smoke so much weed in one day. But when I just got out of a group home and I hadn't hit a blunt in a year and half, I hit the blunt and I never felt like that before. I thought they made some new weed since I've been gone.

But, it's the same shhh I was smoking, so I quit smoking. I've been poppin' pills and when I come back home I started poppin' damn near every day. I pop so many pills since I've been back. Now when I pop it don't even feel the same. I just be on some other shhh.

-Leonard B2

From The Beat: You start by saying you aren't "a major drug user" and then go on to describe some major drug use! Why do you think you need to take pills or weed to get through the day? Do you ever feel like you're not just a prisoner here, but you're also a prisoner to that need of yours to pop or to smoke? Experience tells us that these limits on your freedom (and make no mistake about, drugs will limit your freedom in every way, from clear thinking to free living) are like slave masters that require more than just one person to fight against. You need the support of others who have gone through what you're going through and have found ways to take back control of their lives. If they could do it, so can you!

A Friend

I have a very special friend, Gutta. I love you Gutta. He's always there for me. We used to go out with each other. Now, dat's like my right hand man.

We went through a lot cutting Y-Tec every day in the teachers' faces. All they would say is, "I'm putting a warrant out for you." And me and him would just meet up on San Bruno in the morning and go to school da next day and do da same thing 'cause we too gutta. I love you, Gutta.

-Kamay GU

From The Beat: Since this friendship is so special why don't you do something good for each other. Real friends keep each other IN school, not out of it. Real friends lead each other AWAY from trouble, not towards it. he both of you by being the one to stand up for the both of you two futures. We see nothing to brag about being "too gutta" because that's exactly where that lifestyle leads, to the gutter! Time to grow up a little and be the responsible young woman you know you can be — not for your friend, but for yourself!

Why Homicide?

Why youngsters got to die by homicide? Why not by natural cause? 'Cause I don't want none of my bras to die. But if it's my way, I would want my bras to die by cancer or something, because when they die by homicide, someone else is going die 'cause of revenge.

-Billitant B1

From The Beat: When we look at the ongoing homicides (by young people against young people), it makes us very sad, but also very angry that so few people in authority are doing anything more than putting people behind bars, as if that will stop the disease of killing. Dying of cancer or some other disease is not easy or pleasant, but at least it's part of a natural process where the young live and the old die. What suggestions do you have that might reduce the violence?

2007

It's probably more murders. You can't be out as late, because it will be dangerous. It gets worse every year. I hope it's not dangerous. I don't want any of my family to get killed.

-Yung Money B1

From The Beat: We hope your sad and tragic predictions for 2007 don't come true, but if the violence continues as you believe it will, we pray that you find a way to keep yourself and your family well out of it.

Will 2007 Be Different From 2006?

It would be different because I'm moving out San Francisco. I'm moving to Arizona! That sucks because I was born in San Francisco, and I stayed there my whole life.

So that's what 2007 is going be, way different because I'm not going to be with my homies on the block doing what I like to do — smoke weed and drink Hennessy. Plus, I got to make new friends and I got to go to a new school. So I'm going to hate 2007!

-Duane B1

From The Beat: You don't really know if you'll hate it or not, Duane. Change is always unsettling and a little nervous making, but no one knows what that change will bring, so no one knows if they'll like it or not until it happens. If you've stayed in this city all your life, then it's time to see some of the rest of the country (and, when you get older, some of the rest of the world, too). It's easy to get stuck in a routine because we know it and it's comfortable (even a routine that sabotages the process of maturing into a young adult because of smoking and drinking). But it's good to shake that routine up from time to time. So keep your mind open to the possibility that this move may be the best thing that ever happened to you.

Da Block Movin' On Without You

Wat's good, Beat! Yeah, man, this ya boy. I am back in the halls. I tell ya, man, I hate this shhh fa' real. You gotta wake up when they tell you to, go to sleep when they tell you to. You get a weak-ass five-minute shower, and to top it off, you wearin' the next ninja' drawe's that he just wore the otha day.

Dis shhh whack. A lot of ninjas be talking shhh because they know a staff gon' break it up and call a condition. You ain't go'n' be able to know w'at's going down on the block. Yo' ninjas could be out there gettin' whacked. So I'm just tryna get out ASAP, 'specially before Christmas.

But yeah, Beat, catch you on the next round.

-Da Carter B1

From The Beat: So, if you "hate dis shhh fa' real," why do you give the system power over your life to put you here? They didn't just decide to drop you in the hall for no reason. So, as much as you hate it, it's apparently not enough to make you stop doing the things that put you here! We see how much you say you want out of here, but we don't see any indication that when you get out of here you plan to change anything. Believe us when we tell you that what brought you here before will bring you here again, each time for longer. If that's what you want, make no changes. If it's not what you want... Well, you know the rest.

Under The Influence

The worst place drugs have ever taken me is to certain places that I wake up from. This one time when I was high as hell (also drunk!), me and my homies were walking around Chinatown. But all of a sudden I blanked out and I woke up somewhere that I don't remember. It was the trippiest high I ever felt.

-Michael B2

From The Beat: Was there any fear in you when you woke up in a strange place not knowing how you got there? If you allow yourself to be so controlled by a chemical when you are free (drugs and alcohol are chemicals), and then also have to live under someone else's control inside here, can you say that you are ever free? Wouldn't you like to be?

Running

Wat's up wit' it? Yeah, dis Drew. I'm back for the sixth time, due to a warrant from running from my group home. They want me to go to another one, but I'll refuse. I don't see why they gone try to send me to another one, but I'm not gone go to another one. They might as well just send me back home and get off dis shhh. But they don't want me to; they want me to start all over again for nothing. Maybe, if they let me get released to my mom, I just might do better and get off probation.

I'm trying to skip a group home and go to Y-Tec. I'd rather do that instead of starting over again. I know I can do better if I was released, but they don't give a damn about what I got to say. My PO wants the worst from me. They don't want to watch me grow strong; they just want me to keep messing up until they can give me that commitment and wash me. But why wash something that's already clean?

They're trying to send my brother to ROP or Glen Mills. I wish the best of luck for him. I know he wishes the same thing for me. All right, then, y'all. I'll holla at ya next week.

-Young Drew B1

From The Beat: So let's get this straight, Drew. You've been locked up here six different times, but you don't understand why they won't just let you go home? If you don't understand why they may not be so interested in what you say (rather than what you do), then there's not much we can say to make you understand. If you believe "they" only want the worst for you, then why don't you have the last laugh on "them" by doing your best and disappointing their expectations? To keep it completely real, the things you hate about the system are not going to change, no matter how much you might wish them to change. Only you can change yourself — and only through those changes can you get out of this mess and stay out of it.

Getting Off Probation

I think 2007 will be different because I'm goin' to be in a group home with other kids and get to see my dad more than the other group homes and get off probation when I finish then go to trade school to be come a carpenter or a construction worker.

-Jo B2

From The Beat: You will get good results out of maintaining such a positive attitude, so stick to it. As for the situation the you're in right now, look past it to a future you create where all of this will be only a memory. Focus on the bigger picture, YOUR FUTURE!

This I Believe

I believe we can get a good job. I believe some people is going home. I believe we go get out.

-Fat T B5

From The Beat: We KNOW you will get out, Fat Thug. What we want to know is whether you believe you're going to stay out...

This I Believe

I believe that there is a God. Only one true God, and He gave his only begotten son to die for our sins, and whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have ever lasting life. Now, I ain't no angel, but I do believe that there is power in prayer.

Right now I'm in the halls waiting to see what they're going to do to me because I am right now fighting a 707 on attempted murder. I'm like, "Damn! How did I get myself into this shhhh?" I just been prayin', askin' God to help me and to give me a mind to make better decisions an' the people I've been hangin' around.

I believe that I have seen what this thug life can get you, and this shhh ain't cool. I'm just sayin' when you innocent and you locked for something like this, this hurt. I'm a real ninja. I feel like this: if you can't do the time, don't do the crime. I'm man enough to say that. For one thing I see if I was locked up for something I did do or have something to do with I wouldn't have this eternal pain that I feel while I'm in here. But I do know God gone see me through this one and I truly believe that.

-Poonie B2

From The Beat: Does attempted murder violate God's laws? Does "believing in" God also require you to try to live according to His laws? Do you? When you give us a slogan like, "If you can't do the time, don't do the crime," we are not convinced that you've thought too deeply about your God's commandments to you. It has nothing to do with "doing the time." Even if there were no time to do, the crime would still be wrong, and God would still condemn it! Why do you think God would let you be punished for something you didn't do? In this world, there are many millions of people who do not believe in the same God you have described here. What do you think happens to those people when they die?

Love At First Sight

I don't believe in love at first sight, because every time I fell in love with a girl, they broke my heart.

-Too Tight B1

From The Beat: Yeah, we've all been there TT! Maybe these girls have not been the right ones because you're too quick to fall in love with girls who look good on the outside but aren't so good on the inside. Love takes time and, like a beautiful garden, requires constant work to keep it watered, fertilized and the weeds out.

Missin' The 'Hood

Beat this that vato Cartoon from San Francisco. Every day I miss the 'hood posted on the block from dawn to dusk doin' everything — jukin' (selling), patrolin' the 'hood, catchin' foo's slippin', pickin' up females, smokin' bomb, get hungry, go get some tacos, take it down with a Corona. Livin' that crazy life.

Once it turns to night the barrios full of convicts and felons. I don't got no mom or dad so the big homies are my role models. They tell me stories 'bout the pinta and lace me up with game.

Damn, I miss the 'hood! Wat gets to me is how easily I could've avoided coming here. That just part of my crazy life. I'm always doin' tiempo in and out, in and out. It's too late now. I'm off to CYA!

-Cartoon B5

From The Beat: You will have a lot of time to miss the block, and if you return to the thing you long to return to, you will have even more time to think about it from the comfort of a locked cell! We hate the system for putting a child like you in a cage and thinking that will cure the "problem" — and we hate how casually you throw away the freedom you have to a system that cares little about you! If we thought shaking you would bring some sense to you, then we'd shake you. But we know you've been shaken plenty in your short life and that hasn't seemed to do the trick. One day (we hope) you will see that you are worth more than the group you claim, but until then you will have to be content being a little cog in a big machine. When you wear out, some other little cog will take your place, and you will be thrown away. Cogs are easily disposed of and forgotten in the interest of a functioning machine.

My Life

When I was young, my mom had gave me to my grandparents when I was seven months old. When I would stay with them, I would always cry because I never had my mom and dad to take care of me. I have three brother and four sisters that look up to me. My mom is now in jail until 9/4/07. When she gets out, she is going to start taking care of me and I will be with my little brothers and sisters. I can't wait until she gets out.

-Young C B2

From The Beat: We can only imagine how hard it must be to wait for your mother to get out of jail, but you have been waiting a long time for your mother to act like a mother, so we know you can do it. We hope you think a lot about those younger brothers and sisters looking up to you because, whether your mother starts taking care of y'all as you hope or not, those little kids will model their behavior after what they see you doing (and not what they hear you saying). So, think about how you want them to act, and then show them how by living it.

This I Believe

After hearing a piece by a gang member doing 36 years with two life sentences for murder, it's funny no more. I'm only 15, and probably gonna do a month for assault, but after hearing that, it woke me up that gangbanging is just screwing around in the street. That ain't no joke. I regret what I did to bring me to jail, and this I believe.

-Michael B2

From The Beat: Yes, the story of the youngster (just 16) about to go to prison for 36 years plus two life sentences is terrible and tragic! But if it keeps you from repeating his mistakes, if it makes you change the things in your life that you know you must change to avoid his fate, then we know he will be thrilled to learn that his example can prevent another terrible and tragic event from happening.

Changing For My Nephew

When I look in my brother's eyes, I could see that he cares and wants me to do good. My brother's funny and a good person. He got a son, so that's my nephew, and I care about him. I don't want him to end up like me for real. Right now that's all I could say for now. Peace out.

-Lil' Kut B2

From The Beat: We hope you know, Lil' Kut, that your little nephew will look to you to pattern his own behavior after. It won't be what you tell him that counts the most, but what he sees you doing that he will follow. If you don't change your act and he follows you into lock-up, how would you feel?

Last Time Writing To You

W'at it do, Beat? This that vato Cartoon from San Francisco. I just had court today and my PO said I'll be gone by Friday (today's Tuesday). I'm goin' to the Y.

I can't wait to bounce. Right now max is the weakest I ever saw it! I been on lock-down for a minute now. The system don't want me in his unit no more and they wont take me off lock-down because he thinks I'ma do some crazy. That's me, but when he said this I looked at him and said, "Do I look like somebody that would do that?" His face turned red, then he walked out of my cell.

Anyways, I'm gone. Hope they ready for me! To all locked up keep your head. One love alrato.

-Cartoon B5

From The Beat: Oh, they're ready for you. We hope you're ready for them. We don't think you are because we keep seeing you getting locked up in this playpen of a juvenile hall. The fact that you "can't wait to bounce" out of here and into CYA is another example of how young you are! But like we always tell you, it's your brain that could save you a lifetime of pain and imprisonment, if only your child's heart would listen. Anyway, Cartoon, there's no reason this has to be the last time you write for The Beat. You can write us from wherever you are, and we will always publish what you send (if it's appropriate). We've enjoyed sitting and talking with you. Good luck!

I Messed Up A Perfect Place

I messed up a place with my uncle. He was like a father to me. He bought me anything I needed, and I had my own room and everything. But I messed up and left for the streets.

-D-Boy B1

From The Beat: Yes, D-Boy, you messed up. That's what we were trying to tell you in relation to your girl who no longer has time for you. You have to look at your own responsibility for how things turn out. Your uncle sounds like a good and decent man, so we believe you can re-create that relationship with him if you act more like an adult and less like a child. We're sure he still loves you, and only wants the best for you. What can you give him (or give up for him) in return for that love?

2007

2007 will be different because my age and act, and it will be different people and a whole different world.

-Lil' D B2

From The Beat: There will be some things that will be different, just as there will be a lot of things s that will be the same as always. What should matter the most is making a change for the best, and learning more than what you think you know today. And by the way, in an hour's writing workshop, why were you only able to write one sentence? You can do better.

My Ex-Wife

I can't believe my girl played me like the way she did! This girl was my whole life. She was my heart and my heart was hers. We went out for two long years. What happened was she said that she didn't have time for me anymore. As soon as she said that, my heart broke! When I mean she broke my heart, I mean she hurt me so bad, my heart literally hurt, but I guess I have to let it go. But then, something tells me to try and get her back.

-D-Boy B1

From The Beat: Have you examined your own behavior in relation to this girl, D-Boy? It seems to us that if you allowed yourself to be taken away from her (because you put your own desires ahead of her, and by acting on those desires, you handed your freedom away), then it was you telling her (indirectly) that you didn't have time for her! In other words, it looks like you left her before she left you, but you're not looking at that part of the equation. If you do get her back, we hope you see the connection between your own behavior and keeping — or losing — her. And if you do see that connection, then we hope you are able to change your act enough to keep her.

Hating YGC

Marin County JH is way better than YGC (Youth Guidance Center in San Francisco.) Marin County is like Disneyland compared to this shhh. I rather go to Marin and eat good and have clean blankets, than have dirty blankets.

-D-Boy B1

From The Beat: You know, in the juvenile hall in New Orleans they get to eat shrimp and other fine foods! But that doesn't mean you'd like to be locked up there! The best way to get to eat good, have clean blankets and a nice room is to stay out of this place, that place, and all places where you are a prisoner! You may be right, D-Boy, that the conditions in Marin are

Don't Want To See The New Hall

I think I'm 'bout to do it big in '07. I'm 'bout to stop messin' up and stop comin' back and forth to juvenile and group homes 'cause I ain't tryin' to see tha inside of the new halls. I hear it ain't good and I'm not even tryin' to find out.

So I'm 'bout to handle my business in this comin' '07, ya heard? When I do get the hell out, I'm go try to stay in school. But I can't lie, I might smoke a lil' weed, but that's about it.

-Darius B2

From The Beat: We don't mean to come down on you hard on this one, but do you know how often we read that this time will be he last, only to see the writer return? We hope in your case you will actually walk the walk instead of just talking the talk. We both know that actions speak louder than words. And a word to the wise: No one ever smokes just "a lil' weed." That may be how you begin, but it won't be how you end. Maybe you should challenge yourself to see how long you can go with a perfectly clear and sober mind...

I Believe In Love At First Sight

Yeah, I believe in love at first sight. Who is it? That's for me to know and you to find out. It happened at her school on her B-day player. Yeah it last 'cause she out there holdin' me down as I write this right here. But yeah, she da wife 'cause she can do things others can't do, man, and that's made me feel loved. But yeah, every thug needs a lady, you know what I'm talkin' 'bout. That's what makes life go by.

-Jr F Baby B2

From The Beat: She may be holdin' you down, but what are you doing for her? How much did she mean to you when you allowed yourself to be taken away from her? If she sticks by you now, do you think you owe her anything different? Is this an equal relationship, or do you expect more support from her than you're willing or able to give? Some things in life are essential and some things aren't. It's up to invest the best of yourself in things that are worthwhile in the long run, don't you think?

How Will 2007

Be Different From 2006?

To me, the difference of 2006 and 2007 is that I feel that I've learned my lesson. Even though I'm not gonna get out until '07, when I do get out, I'm gonna change. When in '06 I be acting mean, I be robbing people, thinking I would get away.

Well, now I know the law is crazy and the consequences is I'm locked up for, like, a while. I'm gonna change when I get out. What I hope that would be different is that '06, I may have gotten locked up for a couple of times, but '07, I hope that I would get out of the system or not come back here again.

-Ramon B1

From The Beat: We wish you would spell out clearly exactly how you plan to change when you get out of this situation. We believe that you want to change in order to stay free and safe, but we don't have a good idea of what changes you are talking about. If you made your money by robbing people in the past, how will you make your money (legit) in the future? If you didn't go to school in '06, how much do you plan to make up in '07? Hoping not to come back into the system is not enough; you must have a real plan so you know what you will do first, second, third and so forth. Think about it, Ramon, because thinking is the most important part of the process of change.

Ain't Nothing Different

2006 has been a messed up year for me. I've done spent half of 2005 and 2006 in juvenile halls and in group homes. I got sent away far from home because I was expected to change. I come home and it's almost the end of 2006.

I tried to do good to try to get off probation, but that wasn't my destination. While my little time at home, I thought that things would probably be better. But instead, it was a daily routine to get jacked by the police. I almost got shot at twice and I violated probation to get locked up again.

I was only out for a month and a half, and now I'm sitting, waiting to be sent away once again. By the time I get out it's gonna be 2008, so 2007 won't be no different from 2006. But probably what the judge choose to do with me will help me in the future.

-Slim Loony B2

From The Beat: We know what you mean when you say 2007 will be just like 2006 for you since you will still not be free. But that doesn't mean things have to be the same. If you focus on that last sentence — where you spend the next year will help you in the future — that's another way of saying that things will be different. Even if you just use that time to think about your future and how to live in a way that doesn't threaten your freedom (or your life) — if you gain important skills to plan for your future — that will make 2007 different from 2006 so that when you get out in 2008, you'll never ever come back!

I've Experienced Love At First Sight

I do believe in love at first sight because it happened to me before. I still remember this one time I got hurt, and I admit I was crying. But back to the subject. I was looking down and my friend's friend came and comforted me. When I looked up, I can't believe my eyes — a girl with a perfect smile smiling at me. Just made me feel all better.

-Mk B2

From The Beat: She really sounds like a lovely person, inside and out, because she was concerned for you when she saw you hurt and crying. But don't leave us on the edge of our seats — tell us what happened!

Preventing Something From Happening

One time I tried to prevent some of my friends from committing a robbery, but they did it anyway and got caught. They came here to YGC. I didn't know about that until like three days later when one of their little brother told me. I thought that they would call me, but they didn't.

Then, like two days later, one of them got out but the other two stayed. I guess he got out because he was only ten years old. Then he told me that he can't hang out wit' those other two, or those two can't be with each other either. Then, about five days later, the other two got out, but all three couldn't be with each other, but can still be with me. They began to change. When they got out I noticed that they changed.

-Alx B2

From The Beat: How did you feel about yourself when you tried to talk them out of robbing someone? How did they feel about you? What kind of changes did you notice when they got out? Have you changed, too? In what ways?

Your Eyes Send Mixed Messages

When I look into your eyes I see evil. Your eyes make me feel very scared of you.

Sometimes I see peace in your eyes. I like when I see peace in your eyes. I love how you act towards me when we are together. Also I love it when we go to the movies. I also like when you make my breakfast in the morning and when your mom makes me feel at home. I love it when you buy me clothes and hats. I also love it when we make love after we get mad at each other. That's all I got to say.

-G-Boa, B2

From The Beat: Except for the x-rated parts (which we enjoyed but had to take out), this is both a very sweet message of love, but also a very mysterious message of fear. You opened this piece with two very powerful statements, but you never explained them. How can this person make you feel so sexy and so special, but at the same time look at you through evil eyes? What makes this person look at you in a way that makes you afraid?

I Believe In Myself, Family, And Friends

This is what I believe — in myself, my family, my block, my friends, my life, my boyfriend. I believe in getting out of here and not coming back. I believe in going to school.

I believe in God. He is there when you need Him. I believe in my block because they're too hard for the streets, my block is the most wanted block. I believe in my mom because she always there when I'm always in trouble, when I'm going to court and I look to my side all I see is my mom. That's why I love you mom.

-Kamay GU

From The Beat: Seeing the way you are bragging about your block, we not sure if you are going to be able to stay out and never come back. That block pride can and will get your in trouble. We have to ask the hard question: Which is more important to you, your block or your mom? It seems to us that, so far, your answer has been: the block! That's because you know how you make your mom cry when you get locked up, and you know what you do on the block is what leads to lock-up. So it seems to us that you are putting other things ahead of her. Saying you love her is very, very important. Showing her that love by sacrificing what you like so that you don't give up your freedom is even more important.

My Thoughts

W'at it do Beat? This that vato Cartoon from San Francisco. First off I wanna send my love and respect to all worthy. Well, now that that's out the way, I'ma tell you what's up with me.

I'ma out to bounce to CYA. I ain't trippin'. It's nada. People — counselors, social workers, the judge — be tellin' me I need to change my way, that I be makin' "poor decisions" when' really they sayin' you're a screw up, that I'm gong to CYA.

Me, I don't care what they say, for real, but what strikes me is they want me to change, but they sendin' me to somewhere where you get trained to be a criminal! There's no changin' — yeah, changin' for the worse. This fool I know just came back from his 90-day "trial." He ain't in no gang, but he had to run with people just to survive.

Me, I'm a gangster. I belong to a certain side. I ain't trippin'. Now don't get it twisted. I'm down till the casket drops. It ain't in me to change gang bangin', what I do best. I ain't gonna lie. Hella homies from everywhere say, "Oh, CYA for foo's and riders, where vatos are down for they shhh, and I'm a foo' and a rider, boy oh boy! So I guess the "Y" where I need to be.

But I don't wanna hear all this "change and better decisions" when I'm going to a place that changes you for the worse, not the better. Come on be real. The judge, counselors, and adults know this. They just say what they say so they can clear they conscience about sendin' another youth to CYA.

Well that's it. I gatta go. To all locked up, one love. Alrato.

-Cartoon B5

From The Beat: No, the CYA is not nada. It's algo. And we agree with you that is hypocritical for judges, POs, counselors etc. to tell you to make better decisions, and then send you to a place where you'll learn to make even worse ones. But all you're saying is that the system is stupid, hypocritical and corrupt. We agree — but you can do nothing about the system, the judges, the POs or the counselors. You can only do something about you. And, from our point of view, the more they lie to you, the more hypocritical they are about wanting you to change, the more you have to change in order to prove them wrong. And take it from people who are much older than you: you have no idea what you will or will not change in your future! When you announce, "It ain't in me to change..." you reveal again how truly young you are. Now don't get it twisted — we LOVE how young you are. We find that kind of certainty about the future endearing and sweet — but also immature and irresponsible. There's no reason why you should be mature at your age, but what we're saying is, don't think you have already made your life-long and immutable choices; don't think you already know everything there is for you to learn. Everything changes, Cartoon... Everything! If gangbanging is what you "do best" — and being locked up in the Y is an example of that "best" — then maybe it's time to develop a few new skills you can get better at than you are at this!

How Will 2007 Be Different From 2006?

I know for sho one way how '07 is going to be different from '06. It's because I'm going to be 18 and won't be able to come back to YGC. I think things are going to get crazier. It's already wild in the city, and some people is rockin' wit' dat. I don't give a you-know-what movement. So it's going to be a lot of murders and more people in jail.

-Robert B2

From The Beat: You say you won't be able to come back to YGC as if you will miss it! But we know what you mean. Since you can't keep those other people from screwing up their own lives (and a lot of other people's lives), what can you do — and what will you do — not to be one of them?

Planning To Change A Lot

Well, I don't like being here. Like man, when I came over here the first time, I went to my room and cried my ass off for like three minutes. I just live her now. That's what it feel like.

I just want my PO to come in here and pick me up and walk me out this place. So yeah, I'm going to do a lot so I won't come back in 2007. But if do come back, I'm just going to do my time. My brother up in jail too, but man, sometimes you just need to do your shhh.

I'm about to get out Dec.1 maybe. I hope I have court today and that maybe next court day, but they trying to do to do me for some stuff that I didn't even do. I wish I can do something so that they can believe me.

-Chago B2

From The Beat: We kept in the good part of this piece that says you want to change so you don't have to come back. And we threw out the bad part of this piece that reads like a threat (come on, Chago, grow up; why would you write down that kind of threat for the staff, the PO, the judge — everyone in your case — to read?) So, while we want to believe you're ready to make those changes (which you do not spell out), when you write, "They going to get it for real..." you basically tell us that all your words about change are just that — words! Time to think about long-term consequences. Time to take responsibility for your own actions. Time to leave childhood behind.

2007 — Better Than 2006!

2007 will be better because I won't do bad things like I do — like mess with people that don't mess with me, and I don't want to be in the system, like I am right now. So the best I can do is not be in the police' face, and everybody don't have to be bad. So if you like this, be smart and don't do shhh like me.

-Tewezzy B1

From The Beat: You know what brought you here and you know how much you hate it here. That should be enough for you to stop doing those things that brought you here so you won't have to be here! We hope you follow your own advice to "be smart" — which means, smart enough to know what the consequences are for bad behavior, and for good.

Preventing Something From Happening

I could never forget about what happened to my friend Jose when he fell off the window. It feels like it's my fault that he fell off five-foot house. But it was not my fault. He fell in love with a girl. Then he fell.

-Whisper B2

From The Beat: We don't really understand what you're trying to say here, Whisper. Do you mean that Jose actually fell five feet off a house, or that he fell in love and that made him fall? In any case, it doesn't sound like something you should feel any guilt about.

Dealing Drugs Put My Life On The Line

Drugs never really took me to the worst. Weed took me to the limit, but not really all that. All that was getting high and having fun. But dealing though, I put my life on the line too many times! I just had "God" watching over me and making sure I was safe on these streets. But I need to get out and get shhh straight, and not catch no life-sentence.

-Harold B2

From The Beat: Do you really think God was watching over and protecting you, but not watching over and protecting those unfortunate victims of the drug trade? Why would that be? Does God have some special plan for you? Are you living up to it? What are you going to change, specifically (what new things will you do and what old things will you stop doing) to get your life straight?

Happy Birthday Monte

Man, why did you have to leave us without saying good-bye? I know you didn't know it's your time. But just know we miss you down here like crazy, fo' real.

Just to let you know you do have a beautiful daughter. Your birthday is on da 29th and we're going to celebrate for you, Just know I miss and love you. RIP Monte.

-Kamay GU

From The Beat: That's nice of you to keep Monte alive through your words. Look after yourself so you are healthy and free so that you can be there to give his little girl an idea of her daddy and how much he's loved by people such as yourself.

Who I Am

I am just barely a teen
I am brave and bold
I am smart, not dumb
I don't cut school
And I do my best
I don't got tattoos
All over my chest
RIP to my dead homies
Laid at rest

-Too Tight B1

From The Beat: Nice poem. If you don't get tattoos all over your chest, where do you get them? (Nah, we're just joking!) We like your description of yourself, but how does your Beat name fit with that description? Why do you call yourself "Too Tight"?

Love At First Sight

I mean I do believe in love at first sight because sometimes people just have them feeling about that girl. But me I had love at first sight.

-Daddy-O B2

From The Beat: Oh yeah? And then what happened?

How Will 2007 Be Different From 2006?

This coming year, it will be different from this year because when I get out, I'll try to go to school every day and think twice before I do something with my friends. Do something nice for people I love, and not hurt them by coming back here to YGC. I just hope that it all comes true next year.

-Daniel B1

From The Beat: We hope it comes true, too, Daniel. Why did you decide to make these changes in your life? Are you tired of being locked up? Are you tired of making your mom cry? Whatever the reasons, we applaud your decision. Of course, "hope" is not enough. Once you get out, you also have to have determination, self-discipline and the memory of how you hated being here!

Love At First Sight

Yeah, I believe in love at first sight because it happened to me. The girl I go out with right now is the one. It was like one of the greatest things that happened to me. When I saw her, I immediately wanted her to be my girlfriend, and now we go out.

I'm her first true love and she's mine. But now that I'm locked up, she usually cries because she misses me and I don't want to put her through that, that's why I want to get out.

-Jonathan B1

From The Beat: It can be really hard on people who love you when you get arrested and taken away. One thing that hurts is the knowledge that the person you loved (in this case, you) didn't really value that love enough to sacrifice whatever it was that gave the system the power to take you from her. You will get out of here, but whether you stay out of here or not may depend on whether you love her more than you love the behavior that brought you here. Your choice.

How Will 2007 Be Different From 2006

I think '07 will be different from '06 because things is lookin' cool wit' most of the sets in San Francisco. But I think that's all gone change when people from those sets get home from the pen — ninjas that really bleed tha block, ninjas dat did shhh fo' tha block den got popped on tha block.

But me, I want shhh to change 'cause I'm tired of lookin' over my shoulder not knowin'.

-Marvin B2

From The Beat: That's a very good reason to want to change. The question is, how will you change? People get out of the pen every day, so we don't see that changing anything. Keep the focus on you and make the changes you know you have to make to live in this world as a free man.

Immature 2006 To Become Mature 2007

There's lots of ways that I could prevent myself from getting locked up, but as I was doing what I was doing, I didn't think about it like I could've done this or that to prevent it I guess I was stupid...

2007 will be different from 2006. My change will be that I'ma start listening to my parents for once, to change my act and not to get my ass back in here.

-Notorious Mk B2

From The Beat: No, we don't think you were (or are) stupid. In fact, we think you're pretty damn smart. But even smart people can do stupid things. Not thinking about how to avoid circumstances you want to avoid is really not a sign of stupidity, but of immaturity. Now that you're facing the consequences of your choices, you're gaining a more mature outlook on things. Now, can you put that new maturity to work so that you truly can avoid this consequence in the future?

Superman, Trapped Behind Bars

The worst place that drugs have taken me is on a hype. Also here to YGC from one drug to another, steppin' it up, pulling all-nighters, to doing it live. All drugs really just make me feel good for a cool little minute, but some even like Superman! But can't nothing last forever. After, I feel kind of stupid without it and with side effects like my ability to learn, memory lost, depressed, brain dead, don't got nothing to talk about, ignoring females.

So basically, drugs ain't gotten me nowhere except for being a gutta-boy. Sometimes even wishing I ain't even messed with any of it. But it's cool, though, 'cause if I ain't ever touched any of it, I would not know what I know or be where I am right now.

-Chicano B4

From The Beat: What you call "stepping it up" — moving from one drug to another — we call playing Russian Roulette. That feeling of being Superman can get you killed because it's only real in your mind, which is under the influence of a chemical. And you say you're not really sorry about the drugs you've taken because they've helped you become who you are and be where you are. So, who are you and where are you?

Doing Too Much

I think 2007 will be different than 2006 because there are going to be new laws you have to follow, and people are going to break them. People are going to get laid off from their jobs. People are going to be in jail because its going to be a new year and people going to do too much.

-Young Money B2

From The Beat: Well, you say next year will be different, but what you describe sounds pretty familiar to us. There are always new laws that people break and go to jail for. People are always getting laid off from work, so where are those differences? Instead of looking at "people" and whether "they" are going to change or not, why don't you tell us about just one person — you! Are you going to change? What's your plan?

Can't Wait Till I Get Out

Man, I can't wait till I get out, man. 'Cause when I get out I'm goin' back to school. I could be out right now with the family. I could be with some girls or at a party smokin' some purp or somethin' right now. But on da real when I get out I'ma change.

-Daddy-O B2

From The Beat: Well, we're encouraged that you plan to change when you get out by going back to school. That is the most important decision you could make for your own future. But don't sabotage an important decision like that by committing yourself to smoking more herb. Even though you may start small, weed has a way of taking over everything — and especially school. Keep your eyes on the prize! (And, as we've told you before, please don't write on all three topics. We feel cheated when you do because we can see that you have important things to say, but you can't say them in just 2-3 sentences. Take one topic and write a whole lot more about it!)

A Real Smile

A real smile is for keeps
A fake smile is a disgrace
For a smile from me to you
You must be willing to receive
I dislike and hate
When people show a fake
I smile on my knees
When praying to the one
In the time of need
I never pray for those who just hate
Cause I choose to smile
To the ones that are willing to go that that extra mile
A real smile is full of miles
Cause a smile from me to you
Ends with a true saying
"I love you"

I have to turn the right way
In order to survive
I'm tired of people dying
Right in front of my eyes

G.A.N.G

Gangs means (Get. A. New. Group.) of all positive,
Forget the compa, the calls, or what ever you call it.
Get a new grip on your life which is the real definition
of gang.
Quit the non-sense.

L.O.V.E

Love (Love. Our. Values. Eternally.)
Find out the real you and change your life.

Turn The Right Way

I have to turn the right way
In order to survive
I'm tired of people dying
Right in front of my eyes
I'm tired of lookin' back
And worrying about the past
I have to turn the right way
And take the right exit off the free way
And turn around makin' sure that I'm not going down
So as I turn around
I'm bound
For peace without the police having to bother me
Cause in every right turn
There's always something good to receive

LIL' LUCKY

Sending us a slew of poems from N.A. Chaderjian (one of several CYA institutions) in Stockton, CA, we bring to you this next writer, David Henderson aka Lil' Lucky. From inspirational poems like, 'Turn The Right Way' and 'A Better Life' to poems that give meaning to words in his own way like 'G.A.N.G.' and 'L.O.V.E' this poet encompasses it all. He reveals parts of himself that suggest utter wisdom and while reading we can't help but await his return back into society to see if he can put all those great thoughts to action. He's given his life over to God, which we've seen can change people's lives. And now all he has to do is keep preparing and sharpening the tools that will steer him away from negative temptations. We know he has the ability to become whatever it is he wants to become, so the anticipation is a little bit much for us. Keep your head up and keep in touch...

Lie/Truth

A lie is (a Lesson. an Individual. never Expects.)
We all wish the best,
The people that are hiding is behind a bullet proof vest.
I wish my best to understand the truth.
The truth means (Telling. Real. Urgent. Theories.
Honestly.)
That means the world is full of lies and truths,
Never know what's real or fake until fully collect evidence
Whether to believe or not to believe.
I am my own man
And I'll make sure that I and other people will understand.

A Better Life

Verse 1:
I'm down a 100%
Representing God
Can't you see
I be sittin' in lil' o' misery
Since the age thirteen
But I never been spiritually free
But I gave up those two numbers that were important to me
But it was a bummer
Having my family sitting
And counting the days that were slowly passing by
As I was in my cell letting out the cry to the one above
To send me a couple white doves
To keep an eye out on my family
But as time was passing by I became spiritually free
And family became happy
That I have been doing o.k.
And as another day rolls by
I'm taking steps towards a better life

Chorus:
A better life is what I wanted
With Jesus in my life
I'm spiritually free
With everlasting life

Verse 2:
Yea back in the day
When I was doing the bad things
I was dope slangin'
And playin' the game
Cause I wanted the fame
Stuck on my name
But as time rolled by
I was witnessing a lot of homicides, suicides, drive by's
While the homies were bashing the end of the tail lights
Waving up their nines
Asking fools if they wanna die
Then another stood up
And said I wanna be just like Jesus Christ
Then pa pop, pa pop, pa pop
And was gone in a minute or two
And see this is not the life that you wanna live
Stay up drug free, gang free, and violence free is the way to be.
Dedicated to my down to earth homeboy "Preduncio Ernest Mendez"

EDWARD ATKINS Let's start off *The Beat Without* section with a bang... This week this next insightful writer hits us with the first three chapters of an installment he calls 'My Thoughts.' And if these are the thoughts he has on a regular basis, then we would love to hear more from him. For as you'll see when you read on, he thinks about many things an incarcerated man would think about, but he doesn't just stop there. He digs deeper by analyzing his thoughts and working through them as a way to figure out just what kind of man he is. And we're learning with each word that he's a man that made a mistake in the past, but won't let that hinder his plans for the future. We're grateful to be given the opportunity to understand this next intelligent mind. Look out for 'My Thoughts Numbers Four And Five,' coming to a cell near you next week... He's writing from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA.

Thoughts #2

Today I sit and stare out of my window into the forest which seems to be at peace. Mentally I am rejuvenated from an exhausting week! Pressure continues to compress my thoughts when trying to formulate a new song so I have decided to give music a rest. No letter from my mother since I've been here and now I'm beginning to wonder has she abandoned me as she did 20 something years ago. I fight to drown the thought out of my mind but my emotional distress is becoming harder to ignore. Rage I dispel through exercise, but how can I rid myself of despair?

I went outside the other day without handcuffs, boy was I happy. It's been 11 months since I was able to relish in some form of freedom. As the days get marked off on my mental calendar I grow weary about what life will be like once I'm back in society. Such fear overcomes me. All of my associates that have life sentences say that I should be glad to have a date but the fact of the matter is being unsure on how I will cope being released and free. In case you forgot I've been gone 6 years 'bout time I walk free from this subworld I would have just over 11 years of confinement under my belt. Should such be considered an accomplishment? I think not and strongly suggest that you don't either.

Haven't heard from my girlfriend since April, I worry that she too has left me to fend for self. She used to be gay but chose to change her sexual interest due to religious beliefs, but I think that she got more than what she bargained for. For some odd reason I think she has ventured back into homosexuality and can't find the heart to tell me. I mean I always questioned such, especially since she's in prison also and surrounded by women daily. Hopefully I'm just speculating and she still in love with me. Out of every relationship I've encountered she is one of the few whom I've grown to love wholehearted and unconditionally. On the truthful tip we've never kissed, had sex, or even consoled each other physically. Our love sprung from a chance encounter in Central Juvenile Hall (Eastlake, Los Angeles) but we also went to school together.

I still remember when I laid eyes on her for the first time instantly she hated me because of my antics and constant disruptive behavior, who knew she was so mature back then. Yeah the minute I met her I knew she was special, it took a while for her to recognize that same thought about me. Every time I saw her she would have the most beautiful smile on her cute face, but soon as she saw me being pepper sprayed and dragged off to the hole for a fight or riot she would bear a look of pure disgust. Hey I thought all girls like ridas for boyfriends but I was wrong, some tend to lean towards the more laid back conservative dudes.

Speaking of her I wonder what she's doing right now, hopefully clouding her mind with thoughts of me. At the moment I'm struggling to find a sense of self. You're probably thinking that you're 22 how could you not know who you are, well to be frank I've never discovered who I am or supposed to be I've only registered different qualities, traits and personalities I have. My biggest down fall is the impressing other factor when I really shouldn't care

what people think about me. I don't know why but ever since I could remember I've been trying to belong and/or be accepted which is why I joined a gang and started committing crimes. You guys know what I mean, because we all seem to jump at the chance to prove we're down or just as down as another without rehashing the consequences of our actions. The only time we can catch on to the actual problem we suffer from is when we have come into contact with places of incarceration. Then the coldest part is even in here we still walk around proving ourselves, for what? Might I ask. We are slowly killing ourselves with yearning to be accepted and for some of us when will the yearning stop?

I cried the other day, not physically but mentally because I no longer feel that I am able to withstand the harshness of my reality. I'm in jail, literally, do I want to be? No, but I have to for a crime I regret. The crime I regret is not being arrested and sentenced to 12 years for robbery and being a known gang member, it's for allowing my ego to be influenced. I'm in here for trying to prove myself just like the majority of us in here. Sure these are our growing pains but what are the spiritual medications needed to suppress our sickness? My solution is self-love. Have you ever loved just a part of you but hated the other? Well, that's where I am today I love myself but hate what I've become.

Saw a couple deer today. Yeah a mother and her calf and as they feasted on the grass outside my cell window I began to wonder if at times they feel as I do. Got on the phone last night and had a nice conversation with my step-mom, to me she's just my mom but to clarify any misconceptions I chose to signify such specifics. She tells me that my lil' brother and sister are doing well both academically and sports wise. My other sister she worries about because she fears she will fall victim to the gang life like the rest of us. It's a trip that my whole family is involved with gangs. The statistics read 1 out of 40 members in my family are gang members. That's bad and sad in a sense. When do we break the cycle? I'm through with gangs once I am free from here.

Why not quit now you ask? Well because I figure it's more of a challenge to quit when amongst the very peers and environment that bred me. I refuse to be a hypocrite. People come to jail, start the whole religious act, get out, and it's back to the old you again. To me that's not cool to play with God/religion to make your self look good. Me personally I have no religious front I pray and worship the Gods but I don't lie to myself because in here temptation is consuming and a lot of times you have to do bad things to keep worse things from happening and that's my motto for which I stick by. I just pray for the strength to carry on being strong nothing else, because I know as soon as I finish saying bless be to the Gods it's back to "what up" and "Eff that" and "Eff this" and "that 'B' got ass." So I choose not to play myself short.

Oh, my name was called for mail I wonder who wrote me. Oh, it's a letter from my aunt and two of my homeboys, which is surprising. Oooh I got a few pictures too that's good. As I look out the window it's a beautiful sunset taking place. "Get down!" Ah shhh something's taking place in another section I can't see exactly what's taken place but from the constant glimpses of police running with batons in their hands automatically tell me it's not good. As I sit in my cell occupying my bunk I stare at the ceiling thinking about life and my perception of such and I am drawn back to ponder what exactly is my purpose... One can only separate the madness individually but to extract its elements one must develop answers as into why such madness invades the mind and proceeds to over-consume thoughts once considered to be at peace...

Thoughts #3

Damn, still incarcerated and it seems that the closer I get to freedom the slower the days seem to pass. Still no letter from mom's or my girl. Hey, maybe they've decided to abandon a ninja or maybe god is punishing me for my past sins. Regardless of the fact I'll get over it just like I do any other time. The question that keeps my mind agitated is, "If I'm the cause of their stray, or is it something beyond my control?"

Institutional Gang Investigators raided my cell today, but they didn't find whatever they were looking for. Because as I preached, I'm trying to stand clear of drama and see to it that I get out to help my mama, you know?

Wrote a new song today and it seems to be packed with my current frame of mind. One of the most things I dislike about prison is it's goal is to segregate and form a racist mentality. Me personally, I get along with all that get along with me. But the institutional design is to divide and create conflict amongst individuals and/or groups. Society already has a plate full of chaos, with the war in Iraq, disease epidemics, religious conflicts and poverty. So implementing racial tension is an overload.

My problem is living restrained, unable to be oneself and constantly being speechy cautious is a big burden on me. If I have to listen to people trying to dictate me, then why am I living? Life is about risks and seeking adventure, not liking someone because of where they're from (whether block, gang, click, or side) is stupid, let alone childish in a sense. Just like your homie telling you not to kick it with so and so, because deep down inside he has a personal disliking for the person in question. Crazy, ain't it? But we often allow ourselves to be influenced by the smallest things. Without taking a minute to question the motive behind such.

You see it all goes back to being a follower and trying to fit in and/or impress people. Being labeled a rida' or a down person is unwanted attention. Look at all the people whom suffered greatly for holding such a title. Larry Hoover, John Gotti, Al Capone, Harry-O, etc... These same men wish they never received such. Everything that glitters ain't gold. Reputation is a burden not a blessing. If we pay attention to the many hood/street legends that have resided amongst us, either their in jail with life, dead, or somewhere in between the both.

Impress yourself. We continuously struggle to be something we're not, adapting to an image and/or stereotype society pegs as cool, the shizz nit, and so forth. Males strive off of ego, image and bravado; females struggle also with identity resulting in self-destructive mechanisms. Video chicks are not every man's dream, or fantasy. Beauty is unlimited, it doesn't just stop at looks, because a person can be fine, a dime, or whatever on the outside. But their attitude consists of ugliness like arrogance, jealousy and scandalous tendencies on the outside.

Life to me is complex because on a daily basis obstacles stray in one's path. I'm always in an emotional roller coaster state, because you can be happy and just like that an obstacle will appear and change your pleasant mood to rage. Boy am I stressed; not due to absence but more so self-confusion. Every time I feel that I've mastered myself something manifests I fail to understand.

Had a dream last night and for more reasons than one déjà vu is an understatement, because to the smallest detail it has become reality throughout today. Took a week for me to continue because I've been debating if my words can make a difference in someone's life. Often I am confused on what direction my life is better off heading in.

I strive to be independent but who can be such when incarcerated. I depend on more people than myself because it is apparent that I can't withstand such stress alone, in this sub-environment of confinement. I shed tears yearning for society to adhere to my pain but feel deeply that my words fall upon deaf ears...

Pain is my emotion in its purest form and to experience such is to endure life's hardships head on. Facing your pain develops strength that's everlasting...

One love until "Thoughts #4" marinate what has been written within my struggle.

Everything that glitters ain't gold.
Reputation is a burden not a blessing.
If we pay attention to the many hood/
street legends that have resided amongst
us, either their in jail with life, dead, or
somewhere in between the both.

Past, Present And Dreams

...Experiences, whether good or bad always seem to have a lesson, but it's the matter if one takes heed to such lessons that matter...

Today I really don't feel like doing nothing, but my situation of incarceration leaves me with no choice. Everyday it's the same boring ass routine up at 5:00 a.m. sharp, for what, I can't explain. Maybe it's paranoia, or to be honest I feel I am institutionalized. Pain I feel daily, but I hide my fear. Another day in hell, but a sweeter name is rehabilitation. My homeboy, yeah I consider him that because we are of like minds, he talks, better yet, lectures me constantly on conditioning my mind to breed positive thoughts.

My passion is music. Lately I haven't been feeling like creating heartfelt songs because my heart is not in it. I paid a visit to the psychologist today and he seems to believe that the reason behind me committing my crime was to be closer to my mother, whom is also in prison. The strange thing is that I haven't had the opportunity to know my mother because she's been incarcerated since I was 20 months old and I'm 22 now. One of my brothers is my crimee and my other brother is in prison too. I wonder are we all just messed up individuals or is it a miscalculation in our chromosomes that cause us to act out or inflict pain amongst society?

The best person to diagnose me is 2Pac because his song "Troublesome" is my anthem it defines me to a tee. Often I dream of loving a woman, but to relish its feeling scares me. Before my confinement I had plenty of sex partners; I classify them as such because they were only used for self-gratification never personal comfort. Nightly I shed tears drowning in my own depression stressing the fact if I'll make it out of here without a scratch or at least alive.

Life is not guaranteed but yet death seems so fruitful and promising. On the streets I used to lose myself in stimulations consuming liquor and narcotics, easing my mind, enhancing my train of thought. I strongly believe that I'm in a struggle not spiritually because spiritually I am and have been abandoned, the struggle I strive to overcome is over-standing self worth.

What is my purpose of being? Who would I confront and press for answers to the questions I possess? Very few understand the mind of a man lost but I relate to those that are too lost as that of a man...I ask for a simple explanation why do I live in a poor population. I found myself out of civilization in a police station. The judge took me out of civilization and sentenced me to incarceration. But I'm just a lost man asking for a simple explanation why do I have to live in a poor population... end of "thoughts #1."

JAIME ESTRADA Writing from the SHU in Crescent City, CA, we bring to you a veteran poet and all around great thinker. This week he sends us four knock-out poems ranging from offering the rest of us hope to describing his situation in jail so we all will have an idea as to what he has to struggle with on a daily basis. We enjoy his words because we know that in the situation he's in, sometimes it can be hard to share ourselves. We've been conditioned to think that we're not worthy enough to share ourselves with the rest of the world. But even with this conditioning he's still courageous enough to release these ideas on us. Thank you for all that you are. It's been our pleasure connecting with you thus far, and we hope this connection will continue for years to come...

Wicked

Wicked dreams and unspoken words floating in my mind.
 Forgotten lost in time.
 Wicked dreams that corrupt the sleep.
 With dry eyes. That just won't weep.
 Dark. Night, day bright, everyday and every night.
 Wicked soul, that is never revealed.
 Skin feeling the chills, feeling the cold night sweat,
 Heat that rises from the heart.
 Torture flare, burns the skin.
 Burns the eyes, dries the tears burns the lies.
 Wicked ways, wicked life burns the shoes as you walk the
 strife.
 To live to die, wicked way, wicked rides.
 Wicked has a corrupted mind.
 Tormented way of forgotten times
 Wicked visions, wicked colors.
 The cries of the forgotten mother.
 Wicked made her shed some tears.
 Lost memories of the forgotten peers
 Wicked intuition, wicked fears, wicked life.
 Mother is trying to save his life.
 Wicked loves, wicked hates
 Wicked is strong to never break.
 Unspoken words left in the heart.
 Unspoken words left. That tear you apart.
 Wicked place inside the mind.
 Hear the screams from time to time.
 Nothing left in this wicked place
 A bright smile replaced wicked is gone without a trace.
 Broken heart never embraced...

Go for what makes you smile, because it takes a smile,
 To make a dark day seem bright,
 Find that, which makes you smile,
 and dream, what you want to dream,
 Go where you want to go, be what you want to be.

Hope

There are moments in life,
 When you miss someone so much
 That you just want to pick them from your dream.
 When a door of happiness closes,
 Another one opens
 But often times, we look so long at the closed door
 That we don't see the one, which has opened for us.
 Don't go for looks, they can deceive.
 Don't go for wealth, even that fades away.
 Go for what makes you smile, because it takes a smile,
 To make a dark day seem bright,
 Find that, which makes you smile, and dream, what you
 want to dream,
 Go where you want to go, be what you want to be.
 Because we have only one life, and one chance to do all
 we strive to do.
 May you have enough happiness to make you sweet
 Enough trial to make you strong.
 Enough sorrow to keep you human.
 And enough happiness to not lose hope...

Mystery Of Creation

The power of the mind in life and death.
 To be squeezed out of breath
 But let's go into first creation.
 Born into temptation in a world of power domination
 To what keeps me up, keeps me down.
 Addicted to breeding in and breeding out.
 Temptation mystery of world creation.
 For medication to control this isolation
 And not fall victim to annihilation.
 Trying to survive the cards that we been dealt
 Able to obtain with precision stealth.
 As we do what's necessary to expand the mind in
 learning wealth.
 In a delicate, but deplorable state of mind.
 Unwinding in an equation of tormented souls of time.
 Plotting in our bodies the poison of he blow.
 Numbing the feeling to the power of growth.
 But all we do is cover more our lives in stain,
 As to evacuate the vessel of pain from the brain.
 Trying to encounter the way of survival.
 Without knowing we already found it, since the day of
 our arrival.
 For the mystery of creation is in our own thoughts
 But we must not settle for what we got.
 But to strive and obtain the power, coming from our
 own hearts.
 If we but only, are strong enough to step up
 And run over any obstacle in our way.
 The mystery of creation. Will not fade away
 But do we have the courage to fight?
 So when the time comes everything will be alright!
 The creation of mystery will stay in the history of time
 In the most powerful domination, in our mind!!
 So it's up to us to overcome all encounters of
 blindness.
 But we must one day show. That even a hard criminal
 has kindness
 For in this world of madness of life and death
 To not be squeezed out of breath.
 But to create our own path to superb success
 And never surrender to the survey of mystery of
 creation.
 Temptation the crippled hands of isolation
 But to obtain a good crony in life.
 A link to a new light.
 A new hope, a new mystery, of our own creation
 And be our own support in this world oblivion
 encantacion...
 PBSP SHU mind...

I Just Did

People are often unreasonable and self-centered if you are
 kind
 People may accuse you of ulterior motives
 If you find happiness
 The happiest of people don't necessarily have the best
 of everything. They just make the best of everything that
 comes along the way.
 The brightest future will always be based on forgotten past.
 You can't go forward in life,
 Until you let go of your past failures and heartaches.
 When you was born you were crying
 And everyone around you was smiling.
 Live your life right, so at the end, you're the one who's
 smiling.
 Send this message to the people who mean something to
 you.
 (I just did) to those who have touched your life in one way
 or another, To those who make you smile when you really
 need it.
 To those who make you see the brighter side of things.
 When you're feeling blue.
 To those who friendship you appreciate
 To those who are so meaningful in your life,
 Because I just did...

The Rose

I stepped out into the blazing Vegas evening, gazed up into the sky at its falling darkness, stretched my arms out towards the floating condensed watery vapors, then inhaled its breath. The street activities were at a minimum, making things quiet. Summer gathered in the weather. The breathing of the earth welcomed me with warm caresses as I took my daily stroll on a course without destination.

I saw the old woman manicuring the rose bushes in her front yard as I ambled past. She glanced at me out of her peripheral vision, quickly returning her attention back to the rose bush. I paused and backtracked my steps. She was now bent over, inhaling the bud of a rose, allowing her sense of smell to become intimate with its sweet scent.

"Naw," I thought. "Yeah," I quickly made my mind up, now brainstorming on what to do. A mystery of tears clouded by vision and I felt the stream of its substance beeline down my cheeks. I wiped at my eyes with the back of my hand, and stepped into the unfenced yard.

"Hello, young man?" she said, probing my face for answers to her hidden questions.

"Hey," I said, nervously, glancing around at the yard, down the street, and then at the ground.

"What can I do for you, young man?" she asked softly.

I tried to speak, but it seemed as though a frog was trapped in my throat. I forced a cough to make sure I was audible and found my voice somewhere between earth and the moon.

"I was wondering if you could use a helping hand?" I said. "I could clip the bottoms, that way you wouldn't have to bend so low."

She eyed me with trained eyes. "Baby, that's mighty nice of you, but what in the world why you want to help me trim some rose bushes, when a fine whipper snapper like yourself could be doing other things?" she asked.

"Back when I was a kid, I used to always help my grandmother with manicuring her rose bushes. She had rose trees just like the ones you have here," I replied.

"She did?" asked the old woman. "Bless her heart. She must be a fine lady with a gentle soul to take the time to care for rose bushes."

"Yep," I exclaimed proudly. "She's a beautiful woman."

The old woman handed me the shears and my hand seemed to have a mind of its own. It wasn't in tune with my mind. It clipped away without instructions. The old woman smiled down on me, then her cheerfulness turned up side down. "Why are you crying?" she asked.

"Huh? Am I?" I said, wiping at my cheeks with the end of my palm, relieving my cheeks of their dampness. "I forgot that I'm allergic to roses, but that never stopped me from

EUGENE WEEMS

Eugene Weems, from state prison in Rancho Cucamonga, California, has been writing beautiful, imaginative short stories for *The Beat Without* for many years now. We are always amazed at the many styles and subjects he has mastered in his fiction. This week he hits us with a brilliant piece that takes you on a journey with him helping an old woman cut her rose bushes, but there's a big twist at the end that'll blow your mind away. We can only allow you to read before you find out because it really is a very sad and surprising ending. And then he closes with a little story about himself that he didn't finish but will and when he does we'll run it. We want to thank him for his loyalty and dedication. So thank you Eugene Weems...

enjoying their beauty."

I motioned to cut a branch from the bush and the old woman swiftly grabbed my arm. "Now, baby, you don't want to go cutting that. It's part of the tree," she said gently, holding back her burst of panic. "You have done a find job. I believe it's time for you to get on up from there."

I picked up on the hint she shot at me smoothly. I stood and gave her back the shears. She accepted them with gentle hands.

"Do I know your parents?" she asked.

"It's possible." I offered their names. Our gazes finally introduced themselves. She was searching the realms of her memories. I broke the silence between us.

"So you still love roses?"

"Still? How do you know that I always liked roses?"

"Just a wild guess, I suppose," I said.

She studied my face again. "You know, I had a big family once. Kids of my own who had kids, and I had grandbabies, but there was one out of the five who was my all-time favorite, but one day they all went away. I never could figure out where they ran off to."

"I know," I thought. "I know."

"Well, I guess that's it for today," she announced. "I so kindly thank you again, baby. I must be hightailing back into the house to wash up and see about my black-eyed peas I left cooking on the stove. Feel free to stop by sometime and visit. I sure could use the company."

"I sure will," I replied.

"You are not telling me no tale, now, are you, baby?"

"No, ma'am, I'm not, I promise to God, cross my fingers and hope to die," I said.

"I guess you can't argue with that promise, because God would strike you down if you break that one," she said.

"I know," I agreed.

She turned and ambled off towards the house and waved over her shoulder without glancing back. I watched her fade into the darkness of the unit room as she entered. I stood there with streams of tears living my cheeks, wondering, "Is that what they mean by Alzheimer's?"

Innocent By Circumstances (This Is What Happened)

At the age of fifteen my life began to undertake a dramatic twist like an unexpected turn in a fictional novel. I could actually feel the strength of demise violently tugging at my soul and the vital spirit of self. Relentlessly hounding my physical being to transgress from my godly teachings that had been instilled in my mind during my infancy stage by my grandmother. She had taken the title and responsibility of mother. Being that my biological mother was killed in a car accident when I was only the tender age of five. Memories of her physical presence could be depicted only vaguely from my childhood memories. I can't recall my sadness of my loss, other than just another recognizable face being absent from my life.

I had inquired about my biological mother during that tender young age but being so young of understanding what death was I only would ask occasionally when I heard the mention of her name. But as time passed, also did my inquiries. I had my grandmother who I recognized through my mind set to being my only mother and that title was how I identified her. She had been all what my heart cherished and desired and the solid foundation to my future that protected me from the sinful ways of the street life. She was beautiful in every essence of life. She was a person made with a platinum loving heart, caring personality, laughter,

warmth, softness and extremely intelligent. I always felt she knew all the answers to the questions or problems I had.

The big pearly white smile she kept advertised on her face was more warming to a person's soul than the rays beaming from the sun in the summer. I was torn from my lovely black mother when I was only fifteen. She had suffered death from the illness bronchitis, an inflammation of the mucous membrane in the bronchial tubes, that had caused her windpipes to collapse. The day of her death became the day of my death to a life that I once cherished. Then became the time of survival in the fast paced treacherous and wicked streets of Las Vegas ghettos. The hustling, larceny, robbery and burglaries became a way of life to obtain the minimum necessities for living.

I had run away from a life that I had once known and a family quarreling with disgust from the thought of who might be compelled to taking me into their home and becoming my legal guardian. Their only other concern was who would be in control of my mother's life insurance policy that she left me as her beneficiary. I cared the least about the money that I had inherited. No amount of money in the world was worth the life of my mother and it surely couldn't soothe or mitigate the pain in my broken heart to the precious loss I endured. I emptied my school backpack of all it's materials onto my bedroom floor and quickly stuffed a small baby sized blue blanket inside along with my pet ferret, who I named Squeegie. (To Be Continued)...

ROBERT Without a letter or anything, came two poems to us from the Upstate Correctional Facility in Malone, New York. Yeah, that's right, we said it — New York. As you can see, The Beat is reaching more places than some of us are aware of. And as we're reaching these places, we're realizing that our struggles are virtually the same wherever you go. For some us, it just reiterates the importance of standing together in unity against an enemy more potent than any outside force — ourselves. So as he explains how people can be 'trapped' we can't help but want better for, not only ourselves, but the people around us too. We're glad we're not the only ones who feel like this. He then closes with 'A Conscious Mind,' which needs no introduction because as you'll see it already speaks volumes.

A Conscious Mind

Deep thoughts or logical thinking or just plain reality,
Something America is zombies to or just paralyzed in the mind to see.
Maybe these words will make up parts of your mind that toehold
no control or never thought you had caused you are blind,
Take heed just listen closely to a conscious mind.
Who of what made us live by the constitution or laws of today era,
Why must we obey them when the constitution is somewhat a secret
And the laws switch up whenever.
Psychology hold that's what they have on the mass or should I
say the whole world.
The secret society, pay attention is trying to take over and rule
the whole world.
One world religion, government and economic balance,
Some people read books and honestly see what it really is but sit
in silence.
A conscious mind needs to oversee which is very much an
emergency,
Really break down the word emergency and what you need to do
is emerge and see,
In the 1700's the Zion's, which is what we call the Jews,
Wrote a protocol for one world domination, which some took
place and some still happens.
Religion is just the breakdown to make yourself hard to find,
Honestly if you could say you love and believe in a person you
never saw,
Makes you way off a conscious mind.
The Pope John Paul has his bones in his closet — on the side,
before the hypocrite was the pope, he made a selling the Nazi
people cyanide.
Our president Bush's grandfather played a major part in Hitler's
massacre to think I didn't know.
He was one of the main founders to Hitler to kill off his people oh
you didn't know.
Silent weapons of war I'm telling it goes a long way.
Society is the Governments guinea pig and they experiment and
have their way.
A.I.D.S, S.T.Ds, cancer and the new chicken disease,
All of those are man made and the Zion's had this planned out
way before our time, can't you see?
Drugs is major part as they smuggled into the country which
seems so easy these days,
But the main distributor is the government because it's nothing
they don't have their hands in hear what we say.
Reagan used drugs to breakdown the strongest movements by the
black man, put the drugs in to the black man hands and he will
kill off thousand of strong black man.
Divide and conquer that's the oldest trick in the book.
But a paralyzed mind can't over see the tactics while they look.
U.S. history is only what they want you to see and why is that?
Cause they took us from out country, stole our culture, gave us a
language and there ways now how about that?
History is what you call the pigs history never letting you know
that everything they learned is taught to them by the black man
then the pigs conquered claming glory...
All we know now is "His - Story."
There's so much more like "911 Fahrenheit" was the greatest
trick thrown in our faces,
The president is so confident that our minds is paralyzed and
show his plans in our faces.
Look at the Katrina crisis, this dude on television acting like
he could care less, cause honestly he is not in control just a
hypnosis to the mass society and he could care less.
It goes deeper but all you got to do is look at the facts and the
truth aint hard to find,
Once you maintain control of self and realize your taking steps to
become the lord of your thoughts controlling of your mind
And that's the start of a conscious mind.

Trapped

Well here is an awkward situation,
'Cause I was trapped in the 'free world'.
Just blinded by what there is to see,
Some probably read this and say
He's going nuts and how could this be.
I just want to grab your attention for a second
So just relax,
Cause I will give you my outlook
And give you so much details to my facts.
I'm locked up
And this is the happiest I ever been in my life,
So much danger in that 'free world',
Watching my back, selling drugs, and doing things
That's crazy that led to this bid of 25 years to life.
I was out there selling drugs to my own people,
You hear me, my own people,
Not realizing I'm the government's puppet
Stopping the growth of our people.
Not really caring if I see another day.
Shhh with that gun on my hip,
Not hesitating to give my own kind this clip.
Not happy risking my life day to day on the grind
Plus watching my back,
Around dudes that supposed to be my mans,
But in a second will lay you flat.
I come to prison an old timer schooled me
'Cause I was a loose canon. Just plain off the hook,
He made me face reality. Has me realize
It's much more to life get my mind right and pick up a
book.
The more I read, the more tears dropped
'Cause even though I was free, my mind was trapped,
I just thank the higher power I'm in prison
And my body is not outlined, plastic wrapped.
The more I read, I became a addict
'Cause I kept on learning and my mind purified,
Smoking all that dust, popping pills.
Man, I'm the reason my brain was being fried.
Now I understand what the Italians meant when they
said, they was going to college, they meant here,
'Cause the education you get in here is far more
advanced and what the education system don't want
you to learn or hear.
I mean it was all-good
The revolutionary movement
And the organizations back in the days
And how they moved that's what's up,
Now we got these fake imitations,
Which supposed to be originals
Break offs going at each other
Except the pigs y'all got it messed up.
I fell victim to all that and yes I could admit,
But the more I learned, the more I wanted to live
righteously and just leave the past behind — I mean all
of it.
Freedom is a must and the freedom is in the law library,
But the mind is still trapped,
Y'all fast to play ball with a butt load full of time.
You're nice too,
So you know you're gonna get picked so hurry!
The story is told if you want to hide anything from our
people Just put it in a book,
It took me to be in prison with twenty-five years to life
Just to pick up a book.
Too blinded by the whips, chicks, diamonds
And all the materialistic that money could bring,
Now I sit here listening to grown men cry every night
It's like a song they sing.
I'm stronger than ever,
Happy and understand and cherish life.
And not once do I feel trapped,
I did at once, but this is the step towards the better of
self
And your mind could never be trapped.

Gordo

Mijo, you find me writing you this letter tonight. To explain why a few things are obviously different in your life, and also in hopes that — although I hope someone reads this to you now — maybe one way or another when you're all grown up you could somehow come across this letter.

First off, let me begin by saying that I love you and truly hope you can forgive me for all that I have put you through. Mijo, the reason why I was not around when you were born and I'm still not around now as you continue to grow, is not because I didn't want to be there for you, but because before you were born I did something that at the ignorant age of fourteen, I thought was a good decision. But it changed my whole life around and affected yours also.

I hate having to watch you grow through pictures because if I would've listened to what my loved ones who would beg me to leave the gang had said, and who now are nice enough to bring me pictures of you, I wouldn't be having to watch you grow this way. You don't know (and I hope you never have to know) how much it hurts inside when you tell me you love me, or at the end of a visit when Abuelita tells you it's time to go, you run to me and hug me and say, "I want to stay with Papi!"

It hurts me because I hate having to watch you go, and because the last abrazo (hug) I get from you brings me back to reality, which is that I will have to wait a whole 'nother week before I can get another one. I'm tired of having to see you like this, Gordito. But unfortunately that one decision that I made before you were born has given me a lifetime of prison as a punishment, and that's the only way I will get to spend time with you.

They gave me 36 to life Mijo, and truthfully, the only reason that I'm down about it is because... broken are the dreams of me being out there with you, showing you how to drive or talking to you about girls when the time comes. If it were up to me, Mijo, I'd be there with you in an instant. But I no longer have that choice, since I practically gave my life to the system.

But what I really want you to know, Isaac, is that just because my life is like this doesn't mean that yours has to be like this also. Do good in school and study hard so when you grow up you can hold conversations with intelligent individuals. Don't just study hard for that though, but for yourself so you can have the satisfaction of knowing that although you were raised in the barrio you were able to get out of there by studying hard and wanting to be something in life.

Hopefully you'll understand this letter that I wrote for you Mijo, because all I want is the best for you, and your forgiveness for my absence. On that note, take care and always keep in mind que te quiero con todo mi Corazon (I love you with all my heart).

RICARDO It's a shame that our juvenile justice system is unequal as far as who gets locked up because it means people fall through the cracks and get locked up for things they didn't do. Now, we're not saying that's the case with this next writer because we don't know him that well, but he's saying it and we're just going along with that since it seems like no one else is. And that's even more of a shame because we've been told that we're 'innocent' 'til proven guilty. But how is that true when if someone says their innocent before going to court and getting it hashed out, they're told they're in denial or they must be lying. It's crazy. That's why some of our lives 'are hard'. He's in the largest juvenile hall in the country, Central Juvenile Hall, in Los Angeles, CA, fighting his case (for his life)... Let's everyone show our appreciation and wish him luck...

Life Is Hard

Where do I begin? When the thing on my mind right now is that I regret getting in to my street gang! Man! How I wish I could just go back to that one day and refuse getting in. If I just would have known the trolubreos (trouble) it would get me into. If I would have known I would have easily have said no! Man how I regret it so, so much even more now because I have a daughter.

Well I'm not going to blame it all on the barrio, well I just don't know? Every time that I would get locked up it would be gang-related. This last time after going to Camp, I started doing very

JAMES Everything this next young writer writes seems to be something powerful, partly because of the situation he's in, but mostly because above all, he's a child with an amazing mind. A mind so amazing that while in a juvenile hall south of our office in San Francisco, he had a sign on his door that stated, "Don't communicate with this juvenile." Which leads us to believe that he's got some sort of power with his words that they feel threatened by. This week he hits us with a poem and a very heartfelt letter to his son, whom he probably won't see for a very long time. And though he does have a couple decades of incarceration ahead of him, we think that if he keeps up his beautiful train of thought, he'll be more likely to get out when it is his time to go up before the parole board. It's a shame that paper work will always overshadow this young man's heart as far as the system is concerned, but we'll continue to let his heart shine through our pages for as long as he lets us. We can't stress how much we want to be supportive of this young man on his journey. Hopefully, he'll let us...

Struggling To Survive

Struggling to survive
Struggling to keep this fire alive
Want to be set free
But it seems that freedom doesn't want me
Why is it that me and brick walls get along
What made me choose to boogie to this well-known
gangster song
Why does the world seem to revolve around violence and
corruption
Why is it that tragedy happens
In one neighborhood it's big
But niños mueren en neustros barrios todos los dias
(children are dying in our communities every day)
And that's the least of the discussion
Why do so many fall to the fabled stories that are told
Haven't they ever heard that just because it glitters
doesn't mean it's gold
How many more boys and girls are gonna have to grow
without a dad
How many more mothers are going to have to lose their
babies, resulting in them being eternally sad
How do we stop theses problems that are only getting
worse
In what way may we discontinue this young Chicanos'
curse
Maybe put down the cuetes and take it back to the old
school
Where knuckling up would always come first throwing
chingasos first was the number one rule
Or better yet, striving to be successful
helping the raza come up on the social ladder
Happy to be a big shot in the world where PhD's matter
But who am I to ask these questions
I'm just another sad vato with a sentence of life
Just thought I'd write these thoughts of mine that I'm
sure bring my raza plenty of strife

good like going to school and seeing my PO every Thursday. Man, but now I'm back again, Central Juvenile Hall, back and forth from Slymar as a HRO man. I can't believe they want to send me to adult court for something that I didn't even do. Just for being accused. Possibly getting 46 years (in prison) for something that I really didn't do.

Well, only God could help me now. And I guess that's part of life huh? But hey every night I pray so God could help me out, so that my baby girl, Brandy, which is my daughter, will not grow up without her father like I did.

The most I wish to get for something I didn't do is juvenile life. Well growing up in East Los Angeles is really hard but I just pray that my judge gives me one more chance in life. To be with the girl I want to marry Elizabeth my baby's mom. Man she has always been there for me. She has never let me down. If I get this last chance I plan to get married and finish high school.

This life is hard what could I say? But if you're reading this take time to think about your life! Because really anything could happen in just a minute and that's the truth! So if you're in camp or the halls and your judge gives you another chance I suggest you go to school and play it smart because you'll find out life is hard the easy way or the hard way. Because life in the pen is nothing that I want to find out about! So just think twice about how you want to live your life. Life is hard!

JAMES CRAWFORD

We really respect this next writer's opinion because we can tell that he doesn't just come to an idea on the fly and start writing about it. He's the kind of writer who mulls something over for a while, or at least until he's content in studying it enough to explain it to the rest of us. We say this because each one of this incredible thinker's pieces seem to be thoughtful and consistent in its message — a message we are more than proud to publish in our newsletter. This week, (the man whom we owe some money to, and will pay in 2007, promise) he speaks about the set up of our society and how it's designed to keep the oppressed, oppressed and the rich capitalizing. It's a very strong opinion so we know there'll be people who both agree and disagree with his thoughts. But regardless what side of the fence you're on, you can't argue the fact that Beat favorite, James Crawford is an excellent writer. So enjoy as we already have... If you don't already know, James Crawford writes to us from California State Prison in Corcoran, CA. Of course, if you do not agree with his commentary we encourage you to step up and share your thoughts in a respectful dialogue.

Meanings Of All Ism's Used In This Piece

Capitalism - the economic system in which the ownership and exploitation of wealth are left largely in private hands. That means those who control all of the world resources and means of production for distribution. For example corporations along with the support of U.S government racist policies can distribute these means of production as they please, especially since they have monopolized all these resources. For example water, good medicine, jobs, homes, land all the bare necessities that sustains life they have under their control.

Why would you want to own water unless you plan on selling it for profit and the question here is how can something free be made for sale? By controlling its distribution and poorly distributing it, meaning tap water in the United States has become contaminated, that people literally been forced to buy their water. The exploitation of a people come into play because the same corporations and government who distribute the free water. The exploitation of a people comes into play because the same corporations and government who distribute the free water is also on the other end selling water.

How they're able to force you into Burger King, McDonald's or Wal-Mart job is by depriving you of those jobs that will give you financial security. This way they exploit you into modern day slave labor where you work for low wages and longer hours allowing the corporations and the corrupted racist government to run off with all the wealth. Capitalism is a corrupted economic system that exploits and demeans humanity and very genocidal in practice.

Racism - is the systematic exploitation, oppression or dehumanization of one people by another based on race. There is only one people on earth capable of the wholesale oppression and exploitation of any other and that is humans who classify themselves as whites...

Colonialism - a common form of imperialism. This is the process by which a imperialist power politically controls economically exploits a third world nation. The capitalistic country, which imposes colonialism, is called a colony. Europeans control in Africa. For example; South Africa, Botswana, Uganda, etc. And the United States control of New Africans, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Native Americans, South Americans are examples of colonialism.

Neo-Colonialism - an imperialistic practice where by the colonizer gives sham-political freedom to a colony, politically, economically, and 'culturally' through a firm economic strangle hold. Most often the colonizer implements Neo-Colonialism with the help of the Black and Brown, or Asian Bourgeoisie middle class intellectual 'puppets' from the colony who are helped into political leadership by the colonizer to manipulate the masses...

Fascism - is the U.S government in complete disguise, while watching all activities of the people and placing tracking devices, cameras, bugs, etc. to watch and control all aspects

of the people in the world activities, just look around by manipulating crime in the media, for example, gangs, sexual predators, terrorism, etc. They have been able to put all under surveillance by the government — the phone conversations, no matter who you are, are being traced, TV's, cars, etc. with chips in them in order to be tracked down. Cameras being placed in stores, street corners it's just a matter of time before they're able to look directly into your home. They all have spy satellites that can watch the whole world. This is fascism and why it's an expansion of Capitalism because their whole purpose is to watch and destroy anyone who poses a threat to Capitalism. This is why the fascist police since this country inception of Capitalism has always been enemies to the underclass people of the world.

Classism - is a system that capitalism created for example the haves and have nots all are divided according to their financial status: underclass, middle class, and the upperclass which is controlled by the one percent ruling class.

White Power - is the ideology and practice, which is the ultra-right wing belief that humans who classify themselves as white are inherently superior to all other human beings and therefore the planet earth and everything on it is theirs as a birthright. The other people of the earth are there solely to be free labor (slaves) or targets for extermination (genocide). The ultimate ends of white power are to have a planet inhabited exclusively by blond haired, blue eyed, white humans.

White Supremacy - is an institutionalized system that is under complete white control. For example, all institutions in the U.S. and abroad is under white control if one need an education or a job one must seek their institutions this go on and on. One need a bank loan it's their institutions, if one want to rent or buy a home, land, etc. all under their control... Which make it easy for them to discriminate against those they're racist against. See how the French has shut its citizens of Color out of its economic system. Paris is a perfect example...

Imperialism - is when developing superpower countries use their military forces to conquer underdeveloped countries simply for the purpose of colonizing and exploitation of that country's people and land. Europe and the United States have used their military might simply for this purpose.

This The Front Sheet To Young Minds

This is not to say that all whites are racists or to generalize them at all, because that would be foolish. Especially since many have shown their dedication toward humanity, but all the same we can't deny 'our' reality simply because we don't want to hurt the feelings of those whites who are 'good' and just as exploited as Blacks, Mexicans, etc. who happen to be the majority of the underclass societies in the United States. So it would do them justice as well to become politically conscious because although whites are the most privileged in the world, due to the atrocities committed against mankind by their forefathers and 'now' the white ruling class, they too will suffer the consequences behind the actions of that one percent white ruling class.

Just as many of people of Color has suffered for generation, simply because of their color. The average white can just look to the world and should be able to see clearly that there is a strong resentment throughout the world for the U-S policies and that 1 percent white ruling class, so much so it is literally outright attacks of whites in some places in the world. So with that said it's all about what's right and rejecting that which is wrong. Regardless if it's in your best interest wrong is wrong and right is right. So remember only a fool can be misguided and we all been that... well, at least those who know what I mean...

Young Minds Are You Ready For This

We must realize that our problems don't only stem from our inadequate education, but from our inability to become politically conscious. That very inability has plagued our parent's lives, our lives, and will claim the next generation of poor Blacks, Mexicans, Asians, etc. Being politically conscious will empower us economically, culturally, educationally, and militarily and so on.

If you truly want to become aware of what's really going on, and why your world seems to be that of the underclass oppressed/repressed societies then just look to the power that govern 'us' then you could get a grasp or a clear understanding of the so-called (land of the free) and its policies that govern us all. Then you'll realize that it's not by accident that we're the poorest, the most oppressed, the most incarcerated, the most uneducated and on and on. Through the U.S. government's racist policies there is an orchestrated organized racist agenda to oppress and destroy all people of the underclass societies especially those of Color. This is why you all must learn about Capitalism, Neo-Colonialism, Racism, Colonialism, Fascism, Classism, Imperialism, White Power, and White Supremacy.

All that I've mentioned is what you need to 'learn' immediately, it is the political practice of genocide that is the root of all our social problems, for example, poor education, no jobs, etc. In creating policies that in turn create oppressive/repressive conditions for our people forcing many into drug use, criminal activities, violent activities, and dehumanizing them at the same time. The practice of genocide is no stranger to humanity, which is why we must not forget the genocides that occurred in the past.

For instance, the one that wiped out 85 percent of the American Natives population allowing the white racist settlers to lay claim to North America while colonizing South America and Central America. They used the disease 'small pox' to achieve this goal which today they're using HIV/AIDS to wipe out the African population in order to lay claim to the land. The similarities are too real.

There's 8 million white racist British settlers in South Africa, they control all the raw materials and resources economics and all the land that is rich in soil. While 95% of the South African natives live in extreme poverty with no bare necessities — not even clean water. 5.1 million of them is HIV/AIDS positive. 'Now', it don't take no rocket scientist to figure out what's going on during the 'colonial era' and apartheid South Africa. African population was at the mercy of the white racist British settlers. They murdered millions and raped children — women even men so these brutal murders did everything in their power to demean and terrorize the South African people. So it's no surprise that with the millions of interracial Blacks in South Africa that exist today that rape was a normal practice, yet the white racist British settlers don't suffer from any AIDS or HIV crisis, why?

Just like with the disease 'small pox' they used it to wipe out the Native American people, after discovering what kind of weapon it would be against society that wasn't advanced in technology, which meant they was defenseless against small pox. Europeans had suffered from small pox, and got it under control in Europe. So they had a cure when they deliberately released it on the American Natives. These same people was able to take control of North America through this genocide.

All that is occurring is history repeating itself. They want the African land and will murder everyone in it to get it so this is why becoming politically conscious will let you get into the minds of the oppressors as well as why they control all of the world's resources and deprive those they're racist against, Blacks, Mexicans, Asians, etc. Once they conquer Iraq's oil it'll only be used to continue fueling their white power agenda in further building their white empire while depriving nonwhite people. This is why all white politicians support this war in Iraq. It empowers their racist agenda, in remaining a super-power at humanities expense. Once you've studied and become politically conscious then you can see that through policies, this racist government does not have your best interest at heart but actually introduce bill after bill to your detriment, creating oppressive/repressive

conditions amongst poor people throughout the world. The media serves propaganda that manipulate the masses minds, while dehumanizing the poor through their criminal element. This way they can numb the masses for when the fascist racist police torture and kill them.

The U.S. Government and all of corporate America and its fascists: military, army, marines, navy, and local police are all functioning under the ideology of a capitalist racist fascist imperialist system. Which is exclusively controlled and ran by white males. Right wing conservatives which make up the Republican Party as well as the so-called liberal leftist all support these racist policies, so don't allow titles to manipulate you — that's why they call it politics.

As you can see the things or issues they claim to fight against each other on are irrelevant to the underclass societies, yet they all agree on policies that further oppress the poor. Yet they're filling the U.S. Supreme Court with those who share the same ideology of the conquerors of this country meaning slavery, lynching, and Jim Crow, and Willie Lynch practice will be reinstated, many already have. For example, execution of those from the poor class societies are the only people executed, which ain't nothing but modern day lynchings. We live in a segregated society, keeping Jim Crow live and well, playing race against race in order to exploit all. As you can see with the minimum wage jobs exploiting the Blacks and Mexicans ain't nothing but modern day slavery. They can resolve anything on the face of this earth if they wanted to, but their racism and capitalist system only encourage that they be the enemy to humanity... white racist politicians aim is to oppress and repress, dehumanize as well as wipe out all people of Color wherever they may be.

In the recent PBS special, which aired 11-2-05 to 11-4-05 called 'RX for Survival and Global Health Challenge'. Don't be fooled because although they come off as the savior in the show, they're actually the 'killers'. It featured those who are suffering from diseases around the world HIV/AIDS, polio, small pox, etc. These diseases just happen to be in what we call the underdeveloped countries or continents. It's not a coincidence that they're all people of Color: India, Asia, Africa, South America who is suffering from diseases in alarming numbers yet, all these countries and continents been under white rule for hundreds of years (colonialism) who have the medicine and technologies to bring these societies to that status of modern day countries, but you don't help or save what you want wiped out.

So many people throughout the world realize that the problem with the world is the white ruling class. This is why people of color is becoming more and more conscious by the day, by becoming politically conscious you're able to challenge and organize against these policies that are racist and oppressive. By the way, how many moral and Christian folks will allow people to live in such conditions? The answer is 'none' these ain't Christians. Please don't allow them to 'fool' you by showing that one percent of our people who actually are successful because the truth is that 99% of 'our' people live below the poverty line globally and in the States. So 'education' and political consciousness is our ticket to freedom.

They demonize the Taliban who they trained and Al' Qaeda, who practice totalitarian, against the Muslim or Arab people, yet they trained them and exploit this same totalitarian practice ten times more effective than Al' Qaeda. They control every aspect of our lives: mentally, physically, and spiritually, and when they can't, they outright kill you or place you in their concentration camps. It's the white way or no way.

Manipulation through propaganda, torture, terror in order to keep you in check when the racist policies are instituted. They bought Telemundo, BET, Telefutura, and Univision in order to control what's going into your mind. This why they have all white programs in respects to movies, etc, or don't have any programs that are educational or show the news from a Latino or Black perspective and these are Black and Latino channels. Their dictatorship come from their economic strangle hold on our communities they got our children literally wanting to have white babies because

LEIJA Writing from the Charlotte Correctional Institution in Punta Gorda, Florida, we give you a writer who's been really consistent lately. And although he tells great stories and tries to get great messages across, we would appreciate it if he kept all that gang writing to a minimum. We're a universal publication, meaning, we want to be as neutral as possible, so when you write stuff that let's people know what gang you're in we try to take that stuff out. Because we're trying to give a voice to the voiceless, we'd be grateful if you could keep the tone on that down. We don't want to start making people feel like you can write stuff that they themselves can't get away with. So please, next time you write keep it to a minimum. As far as his poems and missives are concerned he's a great writer in that he puts us where he was with his stories and attempts to offer his baby's mother comfort even though he's not out there with her. We really enjoy his writing, we just wish he'd exercise restraint when glorifying his gang and the lifestyle that comes along with it, which usually ends in death or a long prison sentence...

Q-vo Beat?

Well I wanna say to all lock down state-wide, keep your head up high young homies, don't let the system ride you all the way 'cause there is better days for everyone who willin' to cooperate with their destiny, right?

To all mi chicana in the Phoenix, Arizona chain gang, keep your nose above the water home girls.

Plus to all the young fathers and mothers in the halls, you need to continue to put hope in yourself 'cause the state will take your kids for not being a good mother or father. To all doing time, q-vo keep your head up.

Crazy Night

I once had a lowrider three-wheeler painted in all black. One day I met with my cousin "Spooky" at his house so we started to eat some frijoles and some hot tortillas de maiz with eggs, we was talkin' about whose bike can go the fastest down the hill. I said my bike homie 'cause I got three wheels. So he went inside the house and got his lowrider bike. He told me lets get the race started cousin...

As we sat on top of the hill I said, "let's go homie." We went faster and faster. I let go of my handle bars and put both hands up and flipped him off. I did that 'cause I was goin' faster but I slowed down. So he can keep up wit "then boom" Mono help...His fork broke in half as I was lookin' back I hit a car with an ol' lady in it. I went over my bike and landed on the hood but I was fine. She got out of the car and started to hit me. I started to cry 'cause she took my All-Star (Converse) shoes off and drove off. As I walk to my cousin we started to make fun of each other.

He got slap at home by my aunt "Jessica" 'cause the bike was hard work to put together. As for me my bike had a flat. But when I went home walkin' with my socks on, my mom ask me where the shoes she got me last week. I said, "an ol' lady took 'em." She started to beat me 'til she started cryin' I would never forget that day that's my bike story homie. "So who next"?

I Do Understand Why

People say they don't know why their life turn out that way. But I ain't one of them people. I do understand why mi vida turn out this way. First, I came from a broke home in San Diego. My father was never around 'cause he was in prison. My mother was too busy to deal with me so I turn to the streets when I was young. I wanted to be like my father "Mono" so I started to bang with my uncle "Tattoo Tony".

I stop goin' to school 'cause money was right and I didn't need no job... I just wanted to be like my father at all times... my uncle show me pictures of my my pops. He said you just like him now little vato. That why my life turn out this way.

I'm now 21 years old caught up in a lockdown maximum state prison in bullshhh Florida. Now I need to roll out of here 'cause I have a little girl. I need to be there for her...I learned the hard way now.

Loving You 'Till The End

Dear Baby Girl,
I've loved you from the start
So my heart ain't been the same
Since we've been apart

Damn girl I really, really miss you
So I can't wait till that day
I've have a chance to kiss you

You're so beautiful
Beautiful as you can be
So I really thank god that you
Got sent to me

My feelings for you are
Very, very strong
I want to be home so bad
But the days are still very long

You're beautiful, you're sexy
And you're my baby
So I do have to admit
Those things drive me crazy

I love you, I miss you
I hope you do too
So you don't have to ask
'Cause my words are true

Well my words are getting short for now
But not for ever
'Cause my love keep going
It won't stop ever
Baby girl
Te Amo Ma

What You Want

"Say, what's really Beat?" Well before we get started I would like to give a shot out to my boo "babygirl" tea mo ... Well this that Chicano name "mono" straight out the street's of San Diego, CA but holding it down in a maximum lock down prison in Florida. Well to all of y'all young people keep your head up above the smoke, 'cause better days are to come. If you talking about changin' your vida, it got to be from the heart, you can't fake no moves homie!

That one thing I did when I got I got out the first time, I made a fake move on the outs. I kept paper chasin' and bangin' harder than ever. I felt no one couldn't stop me at all, homie. I had an ace coon boom name "Sleepy" but he got killed in prison for dealin' with wrong people... "R.I.P Sleepy." He left his son behind and his familia 'cause he wanted to bang in prison with his so-called homies.

Look young ones they ain't playin' with us no more. They are given out time bigger and longer. So think before you roll out the halls. What goin' to be your next move... 'cause life a chess game you got to make your next move before you blow your move. But chale think real deep what you want. Is it time or your life. I guess I'll holla at you on the flip side.

Lastly, "I know you thinkin' about" the streets but the streets ain't missin' you or thinking of you. Ha, ha.

untitled

I don't believe nobody word or who told them what poppin'... cause now of days stuff be water down or chop up, I only trust mi familia and my homies only. Cause they keep it raw 100 percent at all time... I just have to peep it out for a good while so I can lock it in my mind for good. No I don't get no butterflies feelings at all. I don't have nothing like that homie at all. I know that for a fact... believe and trust...

Not Where It's At

In a dorm with 128 vatos, yep this is prison homie, where we known as a six number name by CO's who control this system. Where we shower with ten vato's next to us, where we use the bathroom with a vato in your cell talking out the back window to the next dorm.... Where we jeopardizing your vida over some honey buns, football bets, smokes, and best believe this place is a danger zone homie.

I've been cut up once on my chest over a game of bones 'cause a vato had to pay me and my homie 150 dollars. But he got mad 'cause he lost his money.

I've been gassed six times 'cause I disrespected the CO's. I seen my homie (Lopez) die on the yard 'cause a vato found out (Lopez) did some dirt on some vato in the varrio. Believe whatever you do in the varrio it always finds a way to some one in prison. I seen young vato's get raped their first day on the point.

Prison ain't for you homie, look you still in the hall you can flip your vida around 'cause prison is real crazy homie. "Prison is stupid" it ain't cool. You can't trust nobody in here. Not even your set 'cause a lot of them just get down in prison so they can have

LEIJA (CONT.)

someone to back them up. 'Cause for a reason they won't make it in here. But when it's time to ride they want to go lock them self in their cell. Only four or two would ride.

I read a lot of your stories and some of you cry over three months. I know a lot of vatos who would do what ever for your time, 'cause some of the homies have life.

You probably doin' better than me. I been down for a while, homie, I have nine more months to do homie. Look if you don't flip your vida, you have two ways you would end up "prison, or the streets are goin' to take your mind, body and soul" 'cause if we live in a world where gangsta's don't live that long, like trick daddy said, "Gotta change my life, Lord knows I ain't living right. Y'all know I ain't chillin' right, smoking out everyday and night. Gotta ease my mind, gotta find time to rewind. 'Cause I'm falling way behind"

So think about your vida young ninja. One love. "peep me".

ALONE

Always I'm in my room thinking of a hard ache, even future gloom.

It's Monday. It's raining on my face.

What a disgrace my life has been at the mere age of ten.

Let me!

Begin by saying I'm neither young nor old my future has been told.

In books of legends sometimes myths they say I was God's last gift

Or perhaps, the devil's curse, I was born not of this earth, I come in different shapes or forms.

It's very good to be me!

To see what I have seen what is yet to be so let me!

Say this it is winter, yes? Wish I could have a kiss.

I am all the things you, want me to be, I am your inner thoughts,

Your, second voice only, only choice so let me end this story. It holds no glory, maybe one day you'll figure out what I'm all about

And maybe then I'll be your enemy. Lover. Or friend.

But until then hold the phone think back to when too,

When you were ten years old and discovered me!

So long ago a time is gone...

I'm still all alone.

SHARCIE WASHINGTON

Sent to us through email by Jacqueline Kelly, a social work intern at the office of the appellate defender in New York City, NY, we bring to you her latest installment from this next incredible poet. She hits us with two poems. The first to what we believe is a long lost love and the second about her experiences where she is. And although she's 'alone' and 'trapped on the third floor,' she finds time to write such amazing pieces of art. We hope Jacqueline stays in touch with us because if everything she sends us is as talented as the likes of Ms. Washington, we'll have no problem publishing it. We thank Ms. Washington for sharing such a big part of herself with us and hope she continues to write.

Trapped On The Third Floor

Every since I came here I was promised I wouldn't be here long,

Boy was that a broken cowboy song.

Now it has been ten whole months,

Still waiting to hear the weather go crunch.

You see we live where windows have no sound all year round,

It's kind of like a high-rise underground.

Yeah I frown, 'cause I love some hot food in this min-town.

See we can't cook or look at anything after ten or grin or we get the warning

"You can lock in!"

All we do is clean get let out late and locked in early,

Called different names and told we're lucky,

Because if we weren't here we'd be back in SHU.

Oh boy! It's bed time can I get an encore...

We are trapped on the third floor.

INDIO

One thing about The Beat is that it lets people who don't normally get the freedom to create like they would want to come up to the plate and form their own creations on their own platform. Each week we're blown away by how imaginative and wise you all are and can't help but be saddened by the fact that some of you may never see the other side of the walls again. And even though we're saddened, there is a part of us that is elated to have had the opportunity to hear your wonderful writings. Indio, who writes from Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA, lets his presence be known with his first piece titled, "There Is A Man." And in his second poem, "Nobody Knows It But Me" he brilliantly takes a song made by Babyface and revamps it with his own little twist. Interested? We were and decided to read on, maybe you'll do the same.

There Is A Man

There is a man I know who had a rough life
It was filled with aches, pain, struggle, and strife...

Everything to gain and nothing to lose,

Life on the streets left him with mental abuse...

Lessons he learned left him cold and hard

He lost a few partners to the fast life and that girl they call crystal

He tried to place loyalty in the hands of his friends
When he turned his back they tried to do him in and sleep with his girl

How could he change his lifestyle if that was all he knew

With no where to go and nothing to do

So many close calls sometimes left in the dark

"Trust no man!" Loyalty kept in his heart

He learned things in life gained severe wisdom

His life is put on hold while doing tiempo behind

These pinta walls

Nobody Knows It But Me

I smile at the judge as he was giving me life

The chains on my waist cut my wrist like a knife

And I'm hurting inside, "And nobody knows it but me."

I head out the court straight for the pen spun around

Winked at my girl, and then started crying inside

"And nobody knows it but me."

I put my clown suit on and I joke with the crew

As the night rolls on I sing a song or two but I'm crying inside

"And nobody knows it but me."

I watch the post man pass each and everyday,

But a letter for me is nowhere in sight

"And nobody knows it but me."

I had to cut her loose even though you know it hurt

Taken nothing with me, but a fist full of dirt I'm dying inside

"And nobody knows it but me."

I'm sorry my love for the life that I lived.

I got more years behind me then I'm promised ahead,

Now I'm dying inside

"And nobody knows it but me."

This mask that I wear slips off in the night,

I scream out your name even though my lips are shut tight.

I'm sorry my love that things had to be,

I'd love to sing you this song if I thought you'd here me.

But I'm dying inside,

"And nobody knows it but me."

MICHAEL OROZCO- LOPEZ The following piece which was originally published in Beat issue 4.27 originally accompanied the magnificent cover art of that old school Beat issue, titled, *My Half World*. We have been grateful for a number of years to share Michael's priceless work. Today in 2006, Michael is on parole. When he wrote this piece Michael was currently housed in the SHU, California State Prison Corcoran in Corcoran California.

Gambling with life

Where does gambling with fate lead to? Like the toss of a coin you chance a 50/50 stake in a wager. Chances are head or tails. Chances are...

What this world of prison bars and razor wires has to offer I'm well aware of. As I'm aware of what the free world has to offer. Yes in spite of my existence here in solitude there's a synthesis of two worlds. I've got my four thick walls that act as an enclosure in more ways than one.

I've also got my television that gives me a peephole to the world. So, even though I'm confined of body, of mind not so much so. There's a whole different world out there... I know about Kosovo and Serbia and ethnic cleansing. I know about political instability and economic concerns. I know about Chiapas and indigenous struggle throughout those regions, and of governmental clamps down, and its armed fist. I know about the Clinton and Bush's, campaigns; senatorial and presidential. I know about the recent shooting drive-bys tragedy in Chicago where once again racial prejudice has reared its ugly head. And of a railroad killer being over exposed on the nightly news. Doesn't the national media love a racial element to its lead story? Just wondering. In sports I know that recently the San Antonio Spurs introduced the Twin Towers and company as new NBA champs. That in Baseball Sammy Sosa's smacking 'em and that Jose Canseco's not to far behind. A '99 version of the Latino Home Run Derby. That the (Cleveland Indians) tribes serving notice to all. And finally that not only do we have Wild Wild West the movie, but a National League version as well, though my beloved Los Angeles Dodgers are just a footnote to this story.

But closer to home and lots closer to my heart the beat goes on with my family. There are marriages, births, separations, up and downs; revelations of a varied assortment. I don't know the half of it, but splashes of insight are enough.

Now after all you have read it appears that I'm well informed and knowledgeable in worldly and family events. But pull back that appearance of knowing and what's revealed? Who am I? What am I? And more importantly, what's to become of me? There are questions in the questions.

Pessimism lives up to a distant horizon. I am one man at the gate of two worlds. I know the joy of freedom and the cruelty of incarceration. Be where I may there exists these two worlds. My soul bears the scars of this division. Once you've made the acquaintance of these four walls it becomes so difficult to shake them. Do you feel me?

Closer to here the free world exists. I could see it through the fences. There! Out there beyond that street! But looks can be

deceiving because those "streets" are well out my grasp as my current status dictates. There are "dates" and required good conduct to obtain such dates. Good time, bad time, one third time, half time. Familiar terms. But for lots there is no such thing, not when you have life, or double life, life without (parole). For them, time is just that time. A calendar becomes a cruel reminder of things never to come. I imagine that? Having life without the possibility of parole; bottom line; you take your last breath in prison! Some proposition, but it's happened to lots, many more that I can't even write all of their names on this page...

But back to this four walled confine. Once you've been in here it's like you've been cursed. For now on you'll forever be waging a war to not come back, if you want to stay out you'll wage a war fought one smart battle at a time.

Once your in here you are at the mercy of a release date and you can't leave until that comes. But once your out it is your freedom indefinite. Just don't forget that it's easy to come back and that your just a hand cuff away from all of this.

These places have many names to disguise what they truly are; placement, juvenile hall, camp, boot camp, youth authority, correctional facility, training center, prison. It's all the same. How do I know? 'Cause it's my story starting at the age ten in juvies to now, state prison at the age of 34.

It's all good out there with the women, cars, and the lifestyle filled with the pride of a young Mexican intoxicated in freedom, family, and enjoying my union with a fine young female, the birth of my son, etc. Growing up strong in a family and church, nothing uncommon to the atypical young Mexican. But then it could be a case of being to presumptuous and the next thing you know you've crossed over into ignorance.

Being an ignorant Mexican was never my intention, and I'm not, but at times when I've let my guard down it's happened as can well be attested too, by my present address.

Now I live in a world of cold cement, bars, razor wires and of armed guards, administrators, correctional officers. Of control button doors, of being hand cuffed to everywhere all of the time. In there is the air of death all around. Reminders are everywhere there are signs. Warning no warning shots, or a CO armed with an assault rifle eyeing our every out of cell movement. Then there's the lethal electrified fence meant to deter escapees to their very coffin.

Death is presence all around in the form of many guises and it's accompanied by this lumbering giant of a beast, this dragon that is the state of California, it encloses all about me and exiles me to these deathly walls and to a lonely existence deep inside to my bones.

So how to survive all this? Be strong and smart. Persevere, not just through iron will, but through knowledge. Be knowledgeable to what's on both sides of this spectrum. Don't leave your fate to chance. And remember that there's always two sides to a coin.

Out and about in the free world you flip a coin, heads you win, tails you lose. In here, heads or tails you lose, there are no winners. So quit taking chances, grab fate, your fate and become a winner through an education and by being involved with family. Don't leave your fate to the toss of a coin.

Just My Thoughts On The Beat

Before I started writing in the Beat Within, I pretty much kept how I felt inside and how I felt on certain subjects, bottled up. The only time I really got to express myself was when my mom came to visit. That wasn't very much. Now that I'm at the California Youth Authority I haven't even spoke to her.

The Beat Within gives you a sort of freedom on the inside. Since I've been locked up. Also, where I'm at, you don't get to speak your mind, you don't get to help people from ending up were you're at. In CYA you do not get to exercise your rights, for our freedom of speech. I think even if a human being is locked up for what ever, they should be heard and respected like anyone else. Just because you make a bad decision doesn't mean that you don't know what you are talking about.

I think that the people that read this might learn something that will help them out if they actually listen. Many readers have not been through what I have or a lot of other people that write have. That is just one of the many ways The Beat helps me release pressure from everyday life and also makes me feel like a better person.

I try my best to write stuff that might help other people out in life. Sometimes I'll write about experiences from my life and what I should have done differently not to end up here. I know that not everyone listens but there are people that do and feel me on what I write. The reason I know this is because some of the stuff I read helps me out and would have helped me out not to come here.

I believe The Beat Within gives to youth a powerful voice. I think it would be more powerful if people stopped writing silly stuff like "I love you Puppet, I will see you in a month, write back." Stuff like that isn't helping no one in any way. Except for the people that are too lazy to write a real letter or communicate with other wards in different units. I'm not saying that's bad or wrong or anything like that, but that's the kind of stuff that ruins it for other people.

The unit I was in at Santa Clara Juvenile hall didn't get to write in

RYAN WEISEL The following commentary was written for Beat issue 4.43, by our old friend Ryan Weisel who at the time was serving his time in the CYA. Ryan was once a major contributor in our weekly workshops in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall. Ryan always appeared to utilize his time wisely and was a very respectful contributor in juvenile, and from his writing we sense that same person, with a message that still holds true.

The Beat until about six or seven months ago, when other units got to for a long time. The thing that upsets me is the other units were not really writing anything good to help out people.

When The Beat Within came to my unit, everybody had something helpful to write on. I think it helped and still does release stress and their problems. I also think it gave us a powerful voice because people wanted to hear what these guys that were so called hardened criminals had to say. So a lot of people around me read it, and they found out that we have feelings, have something positive to say and are smarter than what most people think.

In a way, I think it makes people that write and work for The Beat feel better inside.

I know when me and my friends saw our piece in The Beat we felt better and more important because what we wrote was a good thing. If I didn't have The Beat to write to, I wouldn't have a way to let my feelings out, since my mom is not around at this point of time. If there wasn't away for me to do this I do not know if I would have been able to do as good in here as I have.

These things are only a few reasons why The Beat Within helps me. I just want to end this by saying to every body listening, keep focused, keep a clear head and hopefully you will not come here. To my people locked up, they know who they are, stay strong. They can't keep you locked down forever.

Dear Beat With

My name is Al Dyer. I am writing you this letter in hopes that you will put my little story in your paper. I am trying to help the young people understand what it's like to be in prison for life or sent to death row,

I was on death row for 15 and a half years. I have been in prison for about 21 years now. I am sending with this letter a copy of my feelings and thoughts of being on death row. Please send me a copy of your paper if you should put my story in it.

Thank you very much, Alfred Dyer, Sr. 8-29-01

ALFRED DYER SR. We at The Beat receive daily letters from men and women doing time in prisons throughout the country. Men and women who have walked that same path that many of you are walking on today. In almost all of these letters, there is a strong desire expressed to try and keep the youth from heading down the same road that they themselves have been down. This letter which was printed in Beat issue 6.32 was sent to us from Alfred Dyer, Sr. Alfred is currently serving a life sentence after spending fifteen and a half years on death row in San Quentin State Prison. We feel the piece speaks for itself, but we hope that all y'all will pay it special attention.

Think About It

Hi, my name is Alfred Dyer, Sr. I'm 48 years old. I would like to share a little wisdom with you and also some pain that I have been through for the last twenty years.

I was on death row for fifteen and a half years when the 9th Circuit Court overturned my conviction. Now I'm awaiting a new trial. I have done four and a half years in San Quentin while I wait. I've seen my friends lose their lives while in prison. I've seen things in prison you would not understand, nor want to see.

The wisdom I want to share with you is, never let your pride or ego take control. Always use your common sense to make your decisions. Never put your hands on anyone, and never take another person's life. You won't ever be able to make it right again. When you hurt someone, or take someone's life, you also hurt all the people that care about you and love you, also the person's family and friends that you hurt or killed.

I used to think like this; So what if I got to jail- "Who would it hurt?" I'm the only one who has to suffer from being in jail. But now I know that isn't true. My mother, my kids, friends; everyone that cares gets hurt and always worries about me when I'm behind bars. Why? Because I didn't think enough about those that love me and care about what happens to me before I went and got into all this trouble that has caused everyone pain and suffering. I thought my actions only affected me when I was in the street using drugs and drinking... trying to be cool in the eyes of the players in the fast life.

There are only two things that you will be sure to receive from living in the fast life: a prison cell and/or a plot in the grave yard... "Believe me!" There are very few that get out of the game and stay out without letting the fast money, big pretty cars and bright lights take them down.

Your always worried about what your homies and wanna-be friends will say or think about you. We always have to get in the last word in an argument. We always have to be right about everything. But, having the last word isn't going to make you anymore right. (If you feel that your right is all that matters.) Why exchange words that might only end up with someone's feelings getting hurt or even a life being taken? "Over what?" Who is right or what others might think about you? That ain't cool. Think at all times, what you do could cause pain to so many people: family, friends, etc... The pain and suffering touches far more people than just you. If you react with your pride or ego instead of common sense, it will lead you to the biggest problem in your life... or

even take your life. Think first before you react. Don't act according to what you feel people will think about you. You'll win in the end and in the end you'll know in your heart you've done things right.

I have a question I'd like you to ask yourself, and don't answer it until you truly think about it. Let your answer come from your heart, not your ego or pride. Be real with yourself. Has anyone ever asked what you really want to be in life? Have you ever really thought about it, what you'd like to be or do? Not what other people say you should be, but what you truly would like to be. Do you realize if your free and alive, you have a fair chance of being what you'd like to be. But there's no chance at all from a jail cell or a grave. Being healthy and free is what it will take, you must make them your top priority. Always remember that!

No one ever asked me what I wanted to be or do. That's why I'm asking you that question now. As I sit here in this cell, a cell no bigger than your bathroom, I'm hoping this letter might help some one from choosing the path I chose. I'd like to help in any way I can to keep our young people from entering this sad and cruel world of confinement. I hope and I pray they will hear wisdom (my pain) and it might help them from a situation much like the one I put myself into.

Never let material things control you to the point your decisions come from your ego or pride instead of your common sense. If you do, you'll lose your freedom and maybe even your life. If you lose something to someone else, you can always work for the money and buy it back, but you can never buy your freedom or your life back.

I'm locked up in this cell twenty-three hours a day, five days a week. Two days of the week, I stay locked up twenty-four hours- all day. Can you handle that? Year after year, out of your cell one hour a day.

Two of my friends lost their lives over me using drugs and not being able to think right. They're dead. Why? For what? They don't even get to come out for an hour, it's all over for them. I'm truly sorry. I mean that from my heart. My family and friends know that's for real. But my being sorry can't change things. It doesn't bring back my friends or even give them an hour out.

Jail and prison is no joke. Don't let the stories you hear (from those that haven't even been here) fool you into letting your ego or pride think for you instead of your common sense. Be yourself, think for yourself and do what's right. Stay away from drugs, they won't make you cool.

There's an old prison saying: "Don't let five minutes of fame turn your life into a world of pain." Or, a life in prison or even a grave yard.

The Beat Within



I lent my mind away
And I still regret it
to this day
I let people control
what I think
And all it did
was make me sink
I didn't make choices
for myself
I left that job
to everybody else
It was like my mind
was a slave
And I had no control
over how I behaved

check out the rest of Beat Within POW on page 10

The Beat Within: A Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside (Volume 1) 1.4

The Beat Within

Time is precious. We can't get it back. To make the choices to pick up your broken pieces, you have to want change. If you don't want it, if you don't desire anything more than what you emotionally have right now, things won't get better, and you won't move forward.



check out the rest of Beat Within POW on page 11

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The Beat Within

She looks at me, for some time they stare, then stray away when I catch her glance. I ask, "What is it?" She responds, "Nothing." She says shyly, "Honestly, what is it?" "Your eyes" "What?" "Your eyes, you look so sad." "I was told I have powerful eyes. They show my anger, sorrow, worry, sadness. They show truth and lie, pain and love. They show a long life lived for a young individual. But my eye's don't talk." "And they are so tense, like everything hurts."



check out the rest of Beat Within POW on page 1

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The Beat Within



check out the rest of Beat Within POW on page 12

The Beat Within: A Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside (Volume 1) 1.8

The Beat Within

CONSTANT FRUSTRATION
BUT NEVER GONNA CRACK
ALREADY INSTITUTIONALIZED.
SO I THOUGHT THAT WAS THAT
HANDCUFFED AND HERDED BACK TO MY CELL
CONSTANTLY THINKING.
"WHAT DID I DO? WHAT THE HELL?"



check out the rest of Beat Within POW on page 13

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The Beat Within

i feel so much pain
im in so much shame
but I just can't explain
i try my hardest
to maintain
im not the one to blame
everything seems so
much the same
once you're dead
everybody forgets yo
name
but why —
i just can't explain



check out the rest of Beat Within POW on page 14

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The Beat Within

Don't let
no one get
you down



check out the rest of Beat Within POW on page 15

The Beat Within: A Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside (Volume 1) 1.11

The Beat Within

You have to be a man in this world, and you have to learn how to be a man in this world — and you have to take responsibility. You even have to be a positive person in this world, too. And you have to make sure you are sticking to your dreams or your plans, and stay focused on yourself or on your family in this world, to be a successful person in life.



check out the rest of Beat Within POW on page 16

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The Beat Within

I rise like the sun every morning. I rise above all the stereotypes. I rise to fight for women's rights, rise stand and pray, and yes, I do it every day. I'm a young African-American young lady. Yes, I can act shady, but I choose not to do the 'foe'. Yes, I'm still going to school, 'bout to make a career in college. Please don't knock it.



check out the rest of Beat Within POW on page 17

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The Beat Within



check out the rest of Beat Within POW on page 18

The Beat Within: A Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside (Volume 1) 1.15

The Beat Within

you know what makes me happy
The fact that my future doesn't
have to be
Me in jail
Or in prison wit' no bail
It doesn't have to be
Me
Settling for so much less
And it's gonna be
Me
Pushing on in life to be the best



check out the rest of Beat Within POW on page 19

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The Beat Within



check out the rest of Beat Within POW on page 20

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The Beat Within



You see no dream is unattainable in life but is only cut short by doubt that we can only be as we are. To break free of this stone one must break free from his old life and begin upon his dreams.

check out the rest of Beat Within POW on page 21

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check out the rest of Beat Within POW on page 22

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The Beat Within



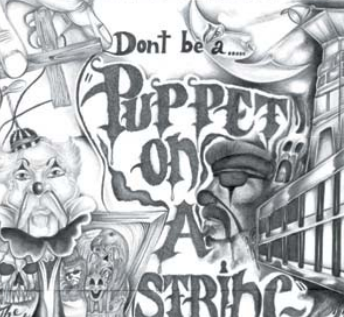
As someone who has spent the better part of his adult life locked up, I can understand how difficult it is for the public to be sympathetic to our plight. But what I fail to understand is how a society that considers itself humane and decent can give up on its children.

check out the rest of Beat Within POW on page 23

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The Beat Within

Don't be a
PUPPET
on a
STRING



check out the rest of Beat Within POW on page 24

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